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'Owen's good, but not that good...'

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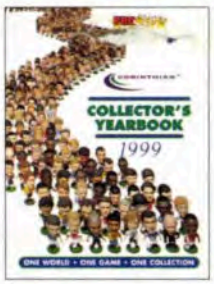

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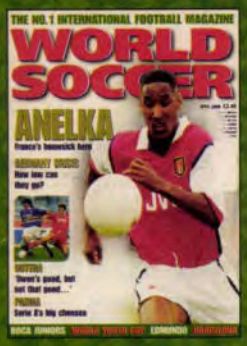

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April 1999

THERE IS no doubt that Nicolas Anelka is the man of the moment. His goals for Arsenal and France have made him Europe's most talked-about striker and led to the inevitable transfer speculation.

Telling the story of Anelka's rapid rise should be simple: talent plus goals equals success. But football in the late 1990s is not that simple (has it ever been?). Anelka's (brief) career has been complicated by agents, the Bosman ruling and the fact that, despite his success at Highbury, he has never entirely convinced us that he has settled in England.

But the Anelka story (on page 14) is what *World Soccer* does best: stripping away the hype and razzmatazz to reach the parts that other magazines can't reach. I don't want to blow our own trumpet too much but it's an approach that continues to attract readers.

Our most recent circulation figures were the highest in *World Soccer*'s 40-year history and meant we are the only serious football magazine in the UK to be gaining readers. We're always trying to improve *World Soccer* (your views by letter, fax and e-mail, please) and there's never been a better time to take out a subscription. ***Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipc.co.uk)***

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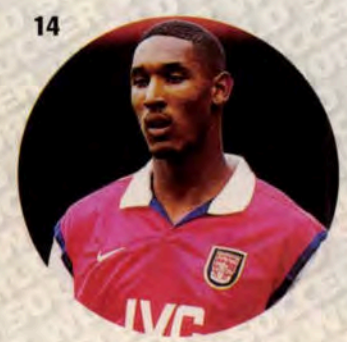

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COMMENTARY

'Keegan has taken the gamble of his life by electing for the part-time option'

New man at the FA...Kevin Keegan with technical director Howard Wilkinson

Doing the clever thing...for once

KEVIN KEEGAN has been the so-called people's choice as England manager for more years than he may care to think. So now he has the job we will see just how good a judge the people may have been.

Keegan has taken the gamble of his life by electing for the part-time option; the FA, contrary to popular opinion, has done the clever thing by accepting his terms.

Look at it this way: if England do not win every game in rip-roaring style then Keegan will be accused of spending too much time on Fulham duty; if Fulham lose a couple of games then Keegan will be accused of spending too much time on England business.

As for all the insistences that he will revert full-time to Fulham in the summer, I wonder. If England do even reasonably well under Keegan it would not surprise me in the least to see an image-conscious Mohamed Al Fayed, the Fulham chairman, agree to a parting of the ways.

After all, one argument runs that Keegan's major work with Fulham has been accomplished: he breathed life, confidence and ambition back into the club; now it may be time for someone else to keep the Cottagers ticking along.

This is where the largest question marks linger over Keegan's time at Newcastle. Had his whirlwind approach not run its course? He put the club on their feet but, once at the top level, could not reach out to seize the prizes.

If Keegan does well with England and steps down, then the FA can say it tried its best: it brought in the best man for the job and would be blameless over his departure. If Keegan does well with England and can be persuaded to stay, then the FA can pat itself on the back. If Keegan does badly then the FA will soon be happily rid of him.

Not bad for a much-criticised organisation which will not have a formally-appointed incumbent chairman until June – which, come to think of it, may have been another significant factor in agreeing to Keegan's short-term appointment.

As for sad, departed Glenn Hoddle, I feel sorry for him.

One man's common sense is another man's utter rubbish. It should not matter what views, quirky or otherwise, the England football manager holds on life, death and reincarnation. Unfortunately for Hoddle, in the present supercharged soccer environment, it does matter.

But he was not an entirely innocent victim. After all, he should have learned last summer that what hot air goes up...must come down.

Jose is still a top man

NO DOUBT about the top footballer in Portugal: Porto's tall, languid Mario Jardel carried off not only the Top Scorer but also the Footballer of the Year award at the annual gala in Lisbon organised by the sports newspaper *A Bola*.

Amid all the euphoria directed at today's pop-star-type soccer heroes, however, it was good to see a special award for one of yesterday's heroes. Jose Travassos was a star inside-forward with Sporting Lisbon in the 1950s, a member of a famous forward line nicknamed the 'Five Violinists'.

Travassos, now confined largely to a wheelchair, grinned in delight to know that he is not forgotten and because it had been recognised that Portuguese football was strong and healthy even in the days before Eusebio.

Judge on merit and only on merit

THE pace towards a decision on the 2006 World Cup is starting to increase now that we are into the last 12 months of campaigning. FIFA's guidelines will have little effect – none of the countries involved is into gift-giving in the way the Japanese and South Koreans were reported to have been. Also, the guidelines appear little more than a method for FIFA to gain a closer knowledge of which delegation is going where and when.

The African confusion has largely been resolved. The Egyptian effort is being withdrawn because of a lack of government commitment, while Nigeria and Ghana have graciously accepted 'persuasive' reasoning as to why they should step back in favour of South Africa.

Morocco is a different case. They are bitter at the Johnny-come-lately attitude of South Africa; after all, the Moroccans have campaigned seriously twice in the past. South Africa appreciates the danger of Morocco attracting Arab-aligned sympathy, and 'meaningful talks' are planned for later this month.

One happy outcome of the International Olympic Committee scandal is that greater pressure is likely to build up on FIFA executive members to judge the candidates on their specific merits rather than allow themselves to be swayed for political, personal or subjective reasons.

Security in South Africa? Political and corporate support in Germany? These could become bigger live issues than either country has bargained for.

Then, of course, if the imminent World Youth Cup in Nigeria is the logistical disaster predicted by so many, perceptions of African competence will suffer from the fall-out – including, unfair as it might seem, South Africa.

England, right now, has the best bid. That may change. If the magnetic power of Franz Beckenbauer can unify and concentrate German opinion, then his bandwagon would be hard to resist. But the game has a long way to go before the penalty shoot-out next March.

Top trio...Suker, Zidane and Ronaldo at the FIFA Footballer of the Year gala

Step back, Sepp

AS THE FIFA Footballer of the Year ceremonials reached their climax in the National Theatre of Catalonia, in Barcelona, one woman in the audience leaned over to her husband and whispered: "Shouldn't the little tubby man get off the stage and leave it to the footballers?"

The woman, lacking an in-depth appreciation of the niceties of football diplomacy, did not know that the "little tubby man" was FIFA president Sepp Blatter. But, like the boy who spotted that the emperor had no clothes, she was right: it ill befits the president of FIFA to jump around on stage, trying to rearrange presentation line-ups, gesticulating and waving to the crowd like an ageing pop star. It was incongruous. It was unnecessary. It was, frankly, embarrassing.

You wouldn't have caught Joao Havelange – whatever else embittered would-be Olympic hosts might say – cavorting like that.

The stars of football are first the players, second the players, and, last, the players. The enduring closing image of the ceremony should have been, simply, Zidane, Ronaldo and Suker. They're the players the kids want to emulate, they're the heroes who inspire the next generation of fans, they're the ones who create the enduring legend that will inspire football generations to come.

Officials – even presidents of FIFA – are all very well, in their place. But they should also know where that place is – and where it is not.

Waiting for Platini

Confusion over role...Michel Platini

MICHEL PLATINI started work with FIFA on January 1 this year, three months later than had been envisaged when Sepp Blatter won the FIFA presidential vote last June. Then, Platini was expected to become Director of Sports, or some such fancy title.

His presence on the Blatter election ticket was a crucial one – helping swing the French vote and more besides. But Platini's input into Blatter's regime promises to be less than the promise. He does not want to live in Zurich so his will not be a day-to-day presence within FIFA House. Nor, it seems, will he enjoy the prestige of a grandiose title. Instead, as Platini puts it, he will be 'counsellor' to Blatter. It will be fascinating to see precisely what that entails.

Is small still beautiful?

THE race to host the 2004 European Championship is now, effectively, down to two horses: Spain and Portugal.

The joint bid from Austria and Hungary has been irretrievably damaged by the allegation of financial mismanagement which led the Hungarian Sports Minister, Tamas Deutsch, to suspend federation president Attila Kovacs and his executive.

Even if Kovacs wins a temporary stay of execution, it's all over for the Hungarians. Which is a pity for the Austrians; they should cut their losses and quit now.

The decision is due to be taken by UEFA in late July but the plethora of events around that time – the Women's World Cup and FIFA Congress in Los Angeles, the Copa America, then the Confederations Cup in Mexico – may force a delay.

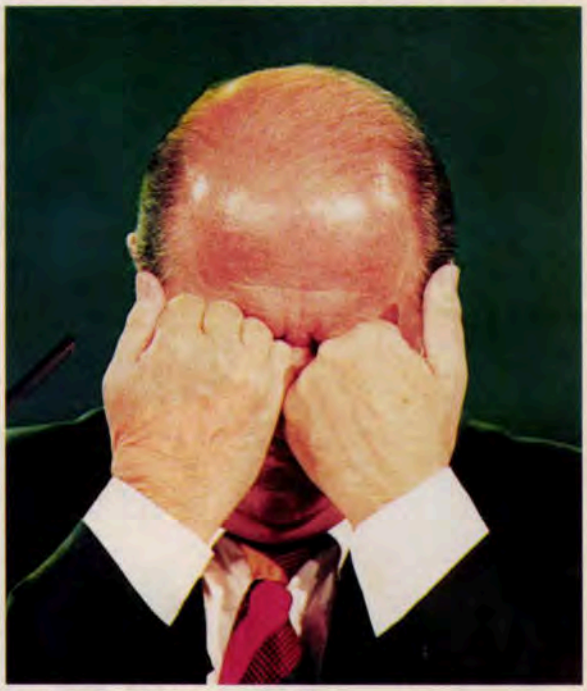
That would suit Portugal, whose delegation, led by the persuasive and hard-working Carlos Cruz, has impressed everyone.

Spain insists it is the best choice because so little needs to be done – and so much money can be made.

Portugal counters by contending that football would be immeasurably better served by going there.

"After all," says Cruz, "Lennart Johansson said small was beautiful when his own country, Sweden, were hosts in 1992; that must also apply to us."

The nook-and-cranny nanny



Identity crisis...FIFA president Sepp Blatter

FIFA'S two-faced fumbling over the Arsenal FA Cup controversy suggests a crisis of identity within the world governing body.

Should it remain aloof and distant, the guardian of football philosophy and its ultimate adventure, the World Cup, or should it be the zero tolerance nanny, meddling in each nook and cranny of the game at every level?

One day FIFA president Sepp Blatter applauded the manner in which Arsenal and the Football Association had put the fair play ethic into practice in offering Sheffield United their Cup rematch after the row over Marc Overmars' goal. A week later, FIFA panicked.

UEFA views Blatter with suspicion. It believes FIFA should concentrate on the game's policy and law-making issues and allow the regional confederations to police the detail. President Lennart Johansson and general secretary Gerd Aigner, I understand, believe it was up to UEFA, not FIFA, to judge whether to intervene in the Arsenal affair.

They also worry that FIFA's willingness to attack club issues reflects a more sinister development – that FIFA, while frightened of the growing power of western Europe's big clubs, wants to tap into the golden vein of money available through the synergy of television, sponsorship and stock market business potential. Why else would FIFA want to launch a world club championship?

But then Johansson and Aigner also fear that, by attracting the big clubs with the irresistible lure of their own lucrative World Cup, FIFA may have found a weapon with which to reduce the burgeoning power of the European governing body.

As it is, FIFA appears to want the best of both worlds. When confronted by the growing political and financial power of the so-called G-14 group of Europe's top clubs, it insists that the clubs must work through the official pyramid of national associations (such as the FA) and regional confederations (such as UEFA).

However, when FIFA sees its dictatorial control of the game threatened by club controversies such as the Overmars goal, it has no compunction about bypassing its own structures.

If nothing else, the Arsenal affair might work out to have been for the greater good of the game in more ways than one.

Horror show...veteran Lothar Matthaus won his 131st cap in the humiliating defeat by the USA

Shattered!

Coach under fire...Erich Ribbeck

It's all gone wrong for Germany coach Erich Ribbeck, says Keir Radnedge

GERMAN football pride lies shattered and splintered in the wake of the ultimate humiliation: a 3-0 defeat by the United States.

Not one crumb of comfort spilled down to coach Erich Ribbeck, Germany's players, their fans or officials. The thundering blow to morale may even engulf the German bid to host the 2006 World Cup – a bid behind which political and business leaders are already far from united.

If the USA had snatched a couple of their goals late in the game, on the break, Ribbeck could have found an excuse; but all three came in the first 26 minutes, leaving the embarrassing impression that the Americans eased up on the three-times world champions.

The venue was not even one of the major soccer centres but Jacksonville, Florida, chosen because at least the local Latin American immigrant population could guarantee a decent crowd, though, in fact, the attendance only just topped 20,000.

Ribbeck could not even plead that he sent out a weakened, third-string line-up. Instead, his team featured five players from Champions League quarter-finalists Bayern Munich (goalkeeper Ollie Kahn, veteran skipper Lothar Matthaus, defender Markus Babbel, midfielder Jens Jeremies and forward Alexander Zickler) and two of Borussia Dortmund's 1997 European champions (Lars Ricken and Andy Moller).

Reaction back home in Germany was akin to that in England in 1950 when the United States beat Billy Wright and Co 1-0 at the World Cup in Brazil: nobody could quite believe it or knew how to react.

"It seems ridiculous to call for the sacking of the coach since he was appointed only last September," said Bayern general manager Uli Hoeness. "But this will be a tough time for him because the coach is always the first target after a bad result. The truth is, we have to look much deeper at our game."

Berti Vogts, forced out as coach last September because of fall-out from Germany's comparative failure at the 1998 World Cup – they lost to Croatia in the quarter-finals – resisted the opportunity to gloat. He could not, however, help pointing out that changing the man at the helm made no difference to the men in the engine-room.

Vogts said: "I was disappointed but not surprised

so much. We have a major problem in German football: we do not have good enough young players any more and those we do have are not developing because their route to the top level is blocked by cheap foreign imports.

"I understand all about Bosman and European Union law, but there must be some solution somewhere. The credibility of national team football, right up to the European Championship and World Cup, is at risk."

To make matters worse for Ribbeck, all three US goals were scored by players contracted to German clubs. Jovan Kirovski, the one-time Manchester United youth player now with Fortuna Koln in the German Second Division, opened the scoring after 16 minutes. Tony Sanneh, who has just signed for Hertha Berlin, added a second in the 24th. Midfield general Claudio Reyna, hardly flavour of the season at Wolfsburg after squabbling with his coach, completed the rout two minutes later.

Reyna was the only survivor from the US team who lost 2-0 to Germany in the World Cup first round at Parc des Princes in Paris last June.

It was the first time the US had managed to score a goal in what was their third match under new boss Bruce Arena. The defences of Australia and Bolivia had proved more resilient than the Germans – another bitter put-down for German federation president Egidius Braun.

Arena, with a modesty which will further embitter the German football establishment, said: "It was a good result but I'm not going to make a big deal out of it. All that concerns me is seeing my team improving each time we play."

The only notable absentee from Germany's line-up was centre-forward Oliver Bierhoff, retained by Milan for their Italian League clash with Fiorentina. In his absence, the attack was so insipid that US goalkeeper Tony Meola did not touch the ball in the first 10 minutes and did not have a shot to save in the entire first half.

NOT SO MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

The defeat by the USA was only the seventh time since the Second World War that Germany have lost by three goals or more. The list is as follows:

June 1954 Hungary 8 West Germany 3 (in Basle, World Cup finals)
November 1956 Rep of Ireland 3 West Germany 0 (Dublin, friendly)
June 1958 France 6 West Germany 3 (Gothenburg, World Cup finals)
June 1985 England 3 West Germany 0 (Mexico City, friendly)
October 1986 Austria 4 West Germany 1 (Vienna, friendly)
July 1998 Croatia 3 Germany 0 (Lyon, World Cup finals)
February 1999 USA 3 Germany 0 (Jacksonville, friendly)

Skipper Matthaus, whose 131st international proved to be one of his worst, said: "Everything went well in training but the match was a disaster. Everything went wrong."

Ribbeck said: "The US were the better team on the day. They were more aggressive and quicker to the ball than we were. I think it was already over at 2-0."

That was on the day of the game: Later, when the shock had evaporated, Ribbeck looked beyond the match and at the state of German national team football in general. He blamed Bundesliga clubs for playing too many foreign players and stifling young talent.

"I can't pick someone for the national team who has played hardly any minutes in the Bundesliga," said the coach. Then, echoing Vogts, he added: "The problem is, young German players do not get much of a chance because all the first-team places nowadays are filled by cheap foreign imports. Then people wonder why I pick veterans such as Matthaus and Moller. But, you know, every team needs foundations and experience. It's getting the mixture right that is so difficult."

Bayern Munich president Franz Beckenbauer – who had variously described the national team as second-rate and the game's administration as amateurist – has suggested that German fans might have to accept the unacceptable and see their national team miss Euro 2000 while Ribbeck rebuilds.

But Ribbeck considers that heresy. "We have qualified for every World Cup and European Championship we have entered," he said. "We can't just throw away the chance to compete at a European Championship. It's unthinkable. Anyway, I don't understand why everyone is painting things so black. It's not as if we have Italy or France in our qualifying group."

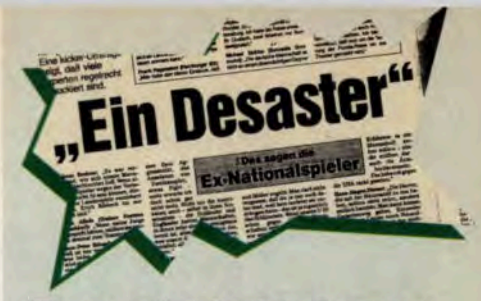
Ribbeck's ill fortune is that his critics are led by such charismatic former heroes as Gunter Netzer (midfield inspiration of the 1972 European champions) and Paul Breitner (1974 World Cup winner). Netzer said: "The defeat to the Americans was the worst performance I have ever seen from the German national side." Breitner claimed: "We have to go right back to the drawing board – at every level."

Breitner, of course, might be considered biased. Last autumn the job of national coach was offered to him and then withdrawn because of criticism he had made of the DFB in a newspaper column.

The good news for Ribbeck – who suggested Netzer and Breitner should "turn on their brains before starting up their mouths" – is that Ottmar Hitzfeld is on his side. Hitzfeld, as coach of Bayern and former Champions League-winning boss of Borussia Dortmund, is Mr Success and he has no doubt that Germany possesses enough quality players to reach the European finals.

"I know the fans will not stand for any failure to qualify," he said. "Anyway, I'm 100 per cent convinced that we'll qualify. We have to. In Germany you don't have any time to say that in three, four years we'll have success again.

"We need success right away – and despite what other people may say after one or two bad results, we *do* have the players to achieve it."



The reaction back in Germany

Klaus Fischer, ex-Germany attacker
"Of all the many things which were missing against the Americans, the most startling was the lack of aggression. No one wanted to get involved in a duel with an opposing player, to take him on. It's time to completely rebuild the team."

Bernd Holzenbein, 1974 world champion
"It was the worst national team game I've ever seen in my life. German football cannot sink any lower. Either Bundesliga pros don't want to play for their country or we just don't have players of international calibre."

Jurgen Kohler, ex-Germany stopper
"Like after the 1984 European Championship in France, we've slipped back a long way. It's high time the whole structure of German football was overhauled."

Paul Breitner, 1974 world champion
"The writing has been on the wall for a long time; the national team has been playing poor football for several years. We can't get worse. Right now we're on a par with Albania and Moldova."

Guido Buchwald, 1990 world champion
"It was the sort of humiliation I never expected. We need a new approach. Even at the risk of putting our qualification for Euro 2000 in jeopardy, we must introduce younger players."

Jupp Derwall, former Germany coach
"A disaster. The team didn't once seek to assert itself. Ribbeck should put the emphasis on more one-on-one play. Then we'd see who wants to do well for Germany and who doesn't."

Franz Beckenbauer
"This defeat was a humiliation, although there were mitigating factors. But all the same we made far too many mistakes. Along with Brazil, we have been the most successful football nation since 1954. But now, for the first time, it looks as though we have no talent."

Keepers united

TWO GOALKEEPERS were honoured recently: the International Federation of Football History & Statistics named Jose Luis Chilavert of Paraguay as the world's best goalkeeper of 1998 and South America's Goalkeeper of the Century, while Antonio Carbajal, who played in the finals of five World Cups (1950-66) for Mexico, was nominated as the best-ever goalkeeper from the CONCACAF region. **CARLOS RAMIREZ** spoke to both men.

WORLD SOCCER: What is your opinion of each other?

JOSE LUIS CHILAVERT: I'm pleased to be beside a football legend. Any other goalkeeper will have trouble playing in five World Cups. It's a remarkable feat, and I am glad that it has been recognised. Lothar Matthaus of Germany has now played in five World Cups, too, but Carbajal was the first player to do it. I call him 'Maestro'. I wish there were more like him.

ANTONIO CARBAJAL: Without trying to flatter Chilavert, I have always admired him. He is technically excellent, knows how to direct his team, and off the field he is a straight-shooter with words.

Jose Luis, you are renowned for your ability to score goals from free-kicks and penalties. Why do you try to do this so often?

JLC: It's something I carry inside me. We goalkeepers are vulnerable, and are blamed for a lot of the goals we concede. We don't have any other way of 'taking revenge' for this, so when I get a chance in a dead-ball situation, I try desperately to take it, and not to miss.

Are all goalkeepers nervous before a game?

JLC: Absolutely. A goalkeeper must be aware of the importance of his position. Great goalkeepers are technically perfect, but must also inspire their team-mates and think positively all the time. You need to warm up properly before the kick-off to do that, and then be able to direct your defence so that they can help you.

AC: The secret of success is to work very hard. I always warmed up thoroughly before each match, for at least 15 minutes. That said, I made my World Cup debut when I was 21, in the opening match of the 1950 tournament, against the hosts, Brazil, in that huge Maracana stadium. I was trembling with emotion and felt very small. But when I held on to the first ball I felt I would be OK. Throughout my career this was always my belief – the first ball you stop in a match gives you and the team great confidence. So whenever I stopped that first ball, I kissed it!

JLC: I agree completely. It's basic – you've got to stop that first ball.

World's best in '98...Paraguay's Jose Luis Chilavert

How has the game changed for keepers over the years?

AC: It has changed a lot. Today, goalkeepers are fitter and have better technique. Tactics have altered: people like Chilavert and Jorge Campos of Mexico are really outfield players.

JLC: Many goalkeepers today do not hold on to shots. They block the ball but allow it to bounce back, giving the opponent another scoring opportunity. Years ago, keepers were better at retaining the ball.

Antonio, you retired while you were still at the top. Why?

AC: I decided to go before I got too old and started having too many poor performances, so I quit after playing for Mexico against Uruguay at Wembley in 1966. It was time to go – I was 37 and not getting any younger!

JLC: I admire Antonio for that. I intend to do the same, to go before people start pitying me and saying that I used to be a good player. I have taken a lot of pleasure from football and I hope I have given some, too. Pro footballers are so lucky – doing what they love, being paid good money, lodging in the best hotels, being admired by masses of people. All this is enough to motivate you to train hard and get better all the time.

You are both very pleasant companions, but you both have reputations for being very fierce competitors. Is there a split personality here?

JLC: Sometimes a goalkeeper gets mad with his team, but remember that a keeper sees the whole pitch and can spot where his colleagues can do better. A keeper has to be a leader and force his team – and his opponents – to respect him.

AC: I behaved that way, too, when I played, but perhaps the Mexican team of my day had more leaders among the outfield players. Some of the greatest Mexican players of all time were in the same teams with me, and they appreciated that all my shouting was meant to help them. I never had any fear no matter who we played. Respect, yes, but not fear.

In the old days there were not so many chances to make a lot of money, were there?

AC: There is no comparison between the money players earn today and when I was playing. I always tried to save because I had a hobby – raising a family of nine wonderful children! In 1962 I was offered a contract to play in Brazil, but the money was the same as what I was getting in Leon. So I stayed there all my career. I still have my home there, and a business.

Antonio became a manager when he retired from playing. Will you do the same, Jose Luis?

JLC: I am looking towards a possible career in management, but it is difficult to succeed. You need to have excellent relations with the president or owner and you need to be respected by the players. We'll see what happens when I quit playing, but that won't be for five or six years, I hope. I'm very happy with Velez Sarsfield and recently signed a contract to stay with them until 2002. I had an offer from Liverpool last year but the money was less than I make in Argentina. Also, my first child had just been born.

Finally, how do you feel about these latest awards?

JLC: I am very proud – it's a recognition of my hard work and healthy private life.

AC: I too feel proud. I've been voted the best CONCACAF goalkeeper of the century in spite of the many great keepers, like Gabelo Conejo, Keller and my countrymen Estrada, Calderon and Campos.

Mexico's maestro...Antonio Carbajal

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

Baffled and bewildered

Swede dreams...Norway won in '95

THE Women's World Cup got off to a chaotic start when the draw was made in San Jose, California. The hosts for the 32-match event, which runs from June 19 to July 10 in seven US centres, were left confused about who they would meet in their opening match, and the situation grew more baffling when officials switched teams in two groups, for marketing reasons.

The USA, North Korea, Nigeria and Denmark were drawn in one first-round group, and FIFA president Sepp Blatter announced during the ceremony that the US would face North Korea in their opening match, on June 19. But Cup officials later said the US would face Denmark in the opener.

The Americans will play Nigeria on June 24 and complete their first-round matches against North Korea on June 27.

China were named as the top-seeded team in Group C, and Norway, the defending champions, as the top seed in Group D, but these two nations were later switched. Officials said they decided on the move because they wanted China to play their opener in the San Francisco Bay area, which has a large Asian community. Germany are the top seeds in Group B.

The draw was held at half-time of a match won 2-1 by a squad of world all-stars against the US.

Blatter praised women's football in general, saying: "They don't cheat, they don't pull shirts, they don't feign a foul. They're not like the men, who lie on the pitch and are taken off on a stretcher then, 30 seconds later, are running faster than ever."

The Women's World Cup is being billed as the largest women-only sporting event in history. The United States won the inaugural event, in 1991, in China. Norway won the title in Sweden four years later.

Keir Radnedge

THE DRAW

Group A: United States, North Korea, Nigeria, Denmark.
Group B: Germany, Brazil, Mexico, Italy.
Group C: Canada, Japan, Russia, Norway.
Group D: China, Australia, Ghana, Sweden.

FIRST ROUND

Saturday, June 19
United States v Denmark; Brazil v Mexico (*East Rutherford, New Jersey*).
China v Sweden; Japan v Canada (*San Jose, California*).
Sunday, June 20
Australia v Ghana; Norway v Russia (*Foxboro, Massachusetts*).
Germany v Italy; North Korea v Nigeria (*Pasadena, California*).
Wednesday, June 23
Norway v Canada; Australia v Sweden (*Washington DC*).
Japan v Russia; China v Ghana (*Portland, Oregon*).
Thursday, June 24
Brazil v Italy; United States v Nigeria (*Chicago*).
North Korea v Denmark; Germany v Mexico (*Portland*).
Saturday, June 26
Canada v Russia; China v Australia (*East Rutherford*).
Ghana v Sweden; Norway v Japan (*Chicago*).
Sunday, June 27
Germany v Brazil; Nigeria v Denmark (*Washington DC*).
Mexico v Italy; United States v North Korea (*Foxboro*).

QUARTER-FINALS

Wednesday, June 30
D winners v C runners-up; C winners v D runners-up (*San Jose*).
Thursday, July 1
A winners v B runners-up; B winners v A runners-up (*Washington DC*).

SEMI-FINALS

Sunday, July 4 (*San Jose and Foxboro*).

FINAL & 3RD-PLACE PLAY-OFF

Saturday, July 10 (*Pasadena*).

ESM 11 February 1999

HOW THEY LINE UP

Hesp (4 votes, Barcelona); Salgado (5, Celta Vigo), Nesta (6, Lazio), F De Boer (3, Barcelona), Thuram (3, Parma); Luis Enrique (5, Barcelona), Vieira (3, Arsenal), Rivaldo (4, Barcelona), Figo (3, Barcelona); Anelka (9, Arsenal), Vieri (4, Lazio).

HOW THEY VOTED

A BOLA (POR)

Schmeichel (Man Utd); Thuram (Parma), Nesta (Lazio), Blanc (Marseille), Lizarazu (Bayern); Figo (Barcelona), Vieira (Arsenal), Rui Costa (Fiorentina), Zidane (Juventus); Anelka (Arsenal), Larsson (Celtic).

DON BALON (SPA)

Hesp (Barcelona); Salgado (Celta Vigo), Nesta (Lazio), F De Boer (Barcelona), Maldini (Milan); Beckham (Man Utd), Almeyda (Lazio), Luis Enrique (Barcelona), Claudio Lopez (Valencia); Yorke (Man Utd), Anelka (Arsenal).

FOOT (BEL)

Toldo (Fiorentina); Salgado (Celta Vigo), Desailly (Chelsea), Leboeuf (Chelsea), Lizarazu (Bayern); Figo (Barcelona), Almeyda (Lazio), Bergkamp (Arsenal), Rivaldo (Barcelona); Anelka (Arsenal), Wiltord (Bordeaux).

FRANCE FOOTBALL

Songo'o (La Coruna); Salgado (Celta Vigo), Nesta (Lazio), Stam (Man Utd), Maldini (Milan); Luis Enrique (Barcelona), Vieira (Arsenal), Rivaldo (Barcelona), Ginola (Tottenham); Anelka (Arsenal), Vieri (Lazio).

GAZZETTA (ITA)

Toldo (Fiorentina); Salgado (Celta Vigo), Thuram (Parma), F De Boer (Barcelona), Angloma (Valencia); Luis Enrique (Barcelona), Veron (Parma), Vieira (Arsenal), Nedved (Lazio); Vieri (Lazio), Anelka (Arsenal).

KICKER (GER)

Toldo (Fiorentina); Nesta (Lazio), Abelardo (Barcelona), Desailly (Chelsea), Irwin (Man Utd); Beckham (Man Utd), Micoud (Bordeaux), Mihajlovic (Lazio), Albertz (Rangers); Anelka (Arsenal), Vieri (Lazio).

SPORT (SWI)

Hesp (Barcelona); Nesta (Lazio), Leboeuf (Chelsea), Mihajlovic (Lazio), Heinrich (Fiorentina); Effenberg (Bayern), Conceicao (Lazio), Rivaldo (Barcelona), Figo (Barcelona); Anelka (Arsenal), Vieri (Lazio).

VOETBAL INT (HOL)

Hesp (Barcelona); Dixon (Arsenal), Nesta (Lazio), F De Boer (Barcelona), Cannavaro (Parma); Conceicao (Lazio), Albertini (Milan), Bergkamp (Arsenal), Luis Enrique (Barcelona); Anelka (Arsenal), Jardel (FC Porto).

WORLD SOCCER

Hesp (Barcelona); Salgado (Celta Vigo), Thuram (Parma), Cannavaro (Parma), Benarrivo (Parma); Hugo Leal (Benfica), Luis Enrique (Barcelona), Rivaldo (Barcelona), Overmars (Arsenal); Anelka (Arsenal), Salas (Lazio).

EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

Players feel the pinch

All is not well in Japan, writes Oliver Butler

AS THE J.League starts its seventh season, the cost-cutting measures brought about by the Far Eastern financial crisis have spread into football management, too.

In an effort to curb the excessive spending of previous years, clubs concentrated their efforts during the close season on tackling players' wages.

The J.League had tried to curb salaries by introducing a limit of only 25 players per club being allowed contracts worth more than £25,000 a year.

But during the close season this limit was rendered almost meaningless by the merger of Yokohama Marinos and Yokohama Flugels. In a sop to the players' union, the League increased the 25-player limit for any club hiring a player released by the newly-merged side, now known as Yokohama F Marinos.

More importantly, many clubs have made large cuts in their playing staff in order to reduce the massive losses. The result has been a depression in overall player wages (see table below).

Nowhere has this been more pronounced than at Verdy Kawasaki, champions in the boom years of 1993 and 1994. Verdy's popularity has slumped, and one of its joint sponsors, the *Yomiuri* newspaper, pulled out, leaving Nippon TV as the sole owner.

In an effort to relieve debts of £13m, Nippon TV slashed Verdy's wage bill by 75 per cent, cutting the playing staff from 41 to 26. Established stars either were transferred (Kazu Miura), retired (Ruy Ramos) or forced to take a major wage cut (Tsuyoshi Kitazawa and others).

Bellmare Hiratsuka, with similar debts, halved their wage bill to £2.3m. Some senior players were given a choice of taking a pay cut (of up to 75 per cent in some cases) or re-employment elsewhere.

For international striker Wagner Lopes there was no shortage of clubs in line to sign him at an unchanged salary, but since many clubs were concentrating on employing younger and cheaper players, it was very much a buyers' market.

The financial upheavals seem to have created two divisions within J1 (the top of the new two-tiered J.League). Many clubs such as Bellmare and Verdy seem content to concentrate on youth while seeking to maintain J1 status – and the financial rewards it brings. Only a select few, such as Nagoya Grampus Eight – backed by financially strong Toyota – Jubilo Iwata and last year's champions, Kashima Antlers, seem prepared to finance a challenge for the title.

Even Kashima were forced to give only token rises to their championship-winning side, and decided to sell their Brazilian star, Jorginho, because of his excessive wage demands.

Much of the blame for the current financial malaise among clubs lies with the administrators. From early on, J.League club general managers have come under criticism from foreign coaches. Yet only recently has this point been recognised by the J.League chairman, Saburo Kawabuchi, who has called for better training for holders of these positions as well as institutional inspection of club accounts. Whether the administrators have sacrificed as much as the players is not so clear.

Oliver Butler works for Soccer Investor *(0171-329 3500)*

Shelved...J.League goods remain unsold

THE UPS AND DOWNS OF J.LEAGUE EARNERS

Name	Age	Club	'98 wage (£000)	'99 wage (£000)
Yoshikatsu Kawaguchi	23	Yokohama	216	216
Seigou Narazaki	22	Nagoya	205	270
Masumi Ihara	31	Yokohama	540	394
Naoki Soma	27	Kashima	405	421
Akira Narahashi	27	Kashima	356	378
Norio Kobayashi	29	Yokohama	297	282
Hiroshi Nanami	26	Iwata	405	432
Motohiro Yamaguchi	29	Nagoya	540	324
Shinji Kobayashi	19	Urawa	43	129
Tsuyoshi Kitazawa	30	Kawasaki	351	195
Masashi Nakayama	31	Iwata	459	459
Wagner Lopes	30	Nagoya	297	297
Shoji Jo	23	Yokohama	237	249

Keeper's father freed by kidnappers

ALVARO CAMPOS, the father of Mexico goalkeeper Jorge, has been freed after being held by kidnappers for six days.

The police suspect that Alvaro, who was released by the side of a motorway outside Acapulco, had been kept captive in the town of Tixtlancingo, a stronghold of an activist group with links to the Popular Revolutionary Army guerilla organisation.

Jorge was in Hong Kong, playing for Mexico in the Carlsberg Cup, when he heard about the kidnap, and he flew home immediately.

"My father is well," he told reporters outside the family home in Acapulco. "The doctor said he is in good health and that the only thing he needed was rest."

When asked whether any ransom had been paid, the keeper said: "I don't think so."

COACH CRASH

Sacked...Glenn Hoddle

Quit...Javier Clemente

Nine months on, only nine left – of the 32 national coaches at the helm at the start of France 98 last June, 23 are no longer in the same job. The full list is as follows:

Country	Coach at start of France 98	In charge now
Argentina	Daniel Passarella (resigned)	Marcelo Bielsa
Brazil	Mario Zagallo (sacked)	Vanderley Luxemburgo
Bulgaria	Hristo Bonev (resigned)	Dimitar Dimitrov
Cameroon	Claude Le Roy (end of contract)	Pierre Lechantre
Colombia	Hernan Dario Gomez (end of contract)	Javier Alvarez
England	Glenn Hoddle (sacked)	Kevin Keegan
France	Aime Jacquet (end of contract)	Roger Lemerre
Germany	Berti Vogts (resigned)	Erich Ribbeck
Holland	Guus Hiddink (end of contract)	Frank Rijkaard
Iran	Jalal Talebi (resigned)	Mansour Pourheidari
Italy	Cesare Maldini (sacked)	Dino Zoff
Japan	Takeshi Okada (resigned)	Philippe Troussier
Nigeria	Bora Milutinovic (end of contract)	Thijs Libregts
Norway	Egil Olsen (end of contract)	Nils Johan Semb
Paraguay	Paulo Cesar Carpegiani (end of contract)	Ever Almeida
Romania	Anghel Iordanescu (end of contract)	Victor Piturca
Saudi Arabia	Carlos Alberto Parreira (sacked)	–
South Africa	Philippe Troussier (end of contract)	Trott Moloto
South Korea	Cha Bum-kun (sacked)	Huh Jung-moo
Spain	Javier Clemente (resigned)	Jose Antonio Camacho
Tunisia	Henri Kasperczak (sacked)	Francesco Scoglio
USA	Steve Sampson (resigned)	Bruce Arena
Yugoslavia	Slobodan Santrac (resigned)	Milan Zivadinovic

The nine survivors:

Herbert Prohaska (Austria)
Georges Leekens (Belgium)
Nelson Acosta (Chile)
Miroslav Blazevic (Croatia)
Bo Johansson (Denmark)
Rene Simoes (Jamaica)
Manuel Lapuente (Mexico)
Henri Michel (Morocco)
Craig Brown (Scotland)

TRANSFER TRAIL

		FROM	TO
Mike AMMANN	G	Kansas City Wizards	NY/NJ MetroStars
Raul Diaz ARCE	F	New England	San Jose Clash
Marco AURELIO	D	Sporting Lisbon	Vicenza
John BARNES	M	Newcastle	Charlton
Stephane CASSARD	G	Le Havre	Montpellier
JULIO CESAR	D	Borussia Dortmund	Panathinaikos
Alain CHAPE	M	Juventude	Toulouse
Mark CHUNG	M	Kansas City	NY/NJ MetroStars
Costas COSTA	D	APOEL Nicosia	Utrecht
Andre CRUZ	D	Milan	Standard Liege (loan)
Peter DEGN	M	Aarhus	Everton
Peter ENCKELMAN	G	TPS	Aston Villa
Xavier GRAVELAINE	F	Montpellier	PSG
Arnar GUNNLAUGSSON	F	Bolton	Leicester
Jonathan HERRERA	M	Free agent	Dynamo Minsk
Karim KERKAR	M	Gueugnon	Le Havre
Yuri KOVTUN	D	Moscow Dynamo	Moscow Spartak
Alexi LALAS	D	NY/NJ MetroStars	Kansas City Wizards
Nicolas LASPALLES	D	PSG	Lens
Christophe LE GRIX	M	Metz	Lorient
Christophe LE ROUX	M	Nantes	Rennes
LEE Sang-yoon	M	Chunnan Ilhwa	Lorient (loan)
Laurent LEROY	F	PSG	Servette
Anders LIMPAR	M	AIK Stockholm	Colorado Rapids
Silvio MARIC	M	Croatia Zagreb	Newcastle
David McNAMEE	D	St Mirren	Blackburn
Tony MEOLA	G	NY/NJ MetroStars	Kansas City Wizards
Alberto MENDEZ	M	Arsenal	AEK Athens (loan)
David MICILLO	G	Atalanta	Parma (loan)
Burton O'BRIEN	M	St Mirren	Blackburn
Nicolas OUEDEC	F	PSG	Montpellier
Marian PAKHAR	F	Skonto Riga	Southampton
Sebastien PEREZ	D	Blackburn	Bastia (loan)
Nikolai PISAREV	F	Moscow Spartak	Moscow Dynamo
Alessandro PISTONE	D	Newcastle	Vicenza (loan)
Dani RODRIGUES	F	Farense	Southampton
Leo RAMOS	D	Salamanca	River Plate (loan)
Nuno SANTOS	G	Vitoria Setubal	Leeds
Tim SHERWOOD	M	Blackburn	Tottenham
Stale STENSAS	D	Rangers	Nottm Forest (loan)
Piotr SWIERCZEWSKI	M	Bastia	Gamba Osaka
Djimi TRAORE	D	Laval	Liverpool
David WEIR	D	Hearts	Everton
Christopher WREH	F	Arsenal	AEK Athens (loan)

Ref charged with killing player

SOUTH AFRICAN referee Lebogang Petrus Mokgethi is due to appear in court charged with the murder of a footballer during a match in the township of Hartbeesfontein.

Mokgethi allegedly shot dead Isaac Mkhwetha, of local side Wallabies, who had lunged at him with a knife after he had allowed a disputed goal by the opposition, Try Agains, to stand.

Wallabies fans had run on to the pitch to protest about the goal, and during the commotion, Mokgethi reportedly took possession of a pistol from a friend on the sidelines.

Mkhwetha is also said to have left the field, in order to get the knife with which he attacked the referee, before the fatal shot was fired.

"It is easy for players and referees to get hurt during games in this area," said Wallabies manager Isaac Mahlapsi.

Eleven Men on high?

OFFICIALS in Swaziland are examining claims that players with the exotically-named Eleven Men In Flight arrived drunk for a match with Mbane Highlanders. Not surprisingly, Highlanders won.

In association with MOTOROLA

WIN a trip to the 1999 UEFA Champions League Final

Fit for the Final...Camp Nou stadium

We've teamed up with mobile phone giants Motorola to offer *World Soccer* readers the chance to win a fantastic prize: a trip to Barcelona to see the 1999 UEFA Champions League Final.

The winner and a guest will be flown out to the Catalan capital by Motorola to watch the match. First-class seats at Barcelona's Camp Nou stadium are guaranteed.

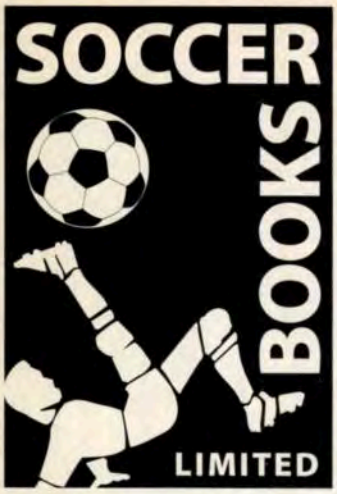
Three runners-up will each receive a top-of-the-range Motorola mobile phone, free connection and 12 months' line rental.

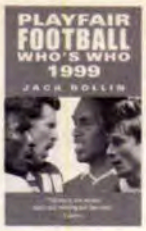
To enter, all you have to do is answer correctly three questions, the second of which appears below. Question three will appear in the May issue. Question one will appear again next month for those who missed it last month. A coupon will also appear in the May issue which you must use to send in your answers.

Question two:

Who scored in a World Cup Final and a European Cup Final played on the same ground, but was on the losing side both times, by the same score?

Usual IPC competition rules apply.





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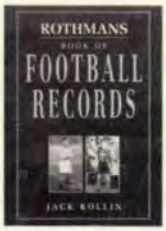

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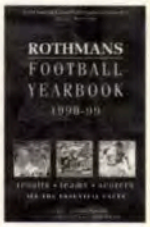

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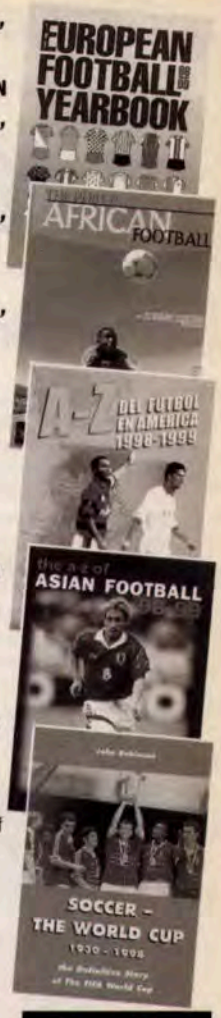

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The Anelka enigma

Kevin Connolly on how the success of Arsenal's young striker provokes mixed feelings in France

NICOLAS ANELKA is a powerful symbol of France's footballing glory – and a symbol of the French game's greatest fears.

Anelka, one of the world's best young strikers, arrived on the international stage when his two goals at Wembley gave France their first victory over England in England.

"France have found the player to lead their attack for the next decade," purred former national coach Michel Hidalgo.

Raymond Kopa, the former French midfielder and star of the 1958 World Cup concurred. "I got goosebumps watching him at Wembley. For a long time we have lacked forwards of true international class. Thank goodness Anelka has come along. France now have a complete team."

Early days...a rare appearance for PSG

But while Arsenal's teenage top scorer was hailed as a new French hero, he has also set a trend which is enabling foreign clubs to prise away France's young stars, and one which the French government now wants to curb by legislation.

Anelka, who turns 20 on March 13, has long been a precocious talent. Andre Merelle, his mentor at the Clairefontaine 'academy', commented a few years ago: "Sometimes he needs to be hassled to make him fulfil his immense potential, because he has such qualities: pace, power and technique."

But the youngster from the bleak Paris suburb of Trappes did not feel that his first club, Paris Saint-Germain, were giving him enough chances to prove himself. He could not break into PSG's first team, despite a stunning goal as a substitute against Lens. In the autumn of 1996, Anelka announced his intentions: "In France there are other young players who play in the big teams. They've had their chance and that's what I'm looking for – the chance to play."

Arsene Wenger had just taken over as Arsenal manager. He believed in Anelka's potential too. The Gunners moved in. They wanted him to join them when it was time for him to sign a senior contract, in the summer of 1997. That's when the wrangling started.

French football has its own system of producing young players – and hanging on to them. The clubs run some of the most sophisticated youth academies in Europe. The reward, and reassurance, for those clubs had been the French federation's stipulation that *apprentis* (trainees) and *stagiaires* (young players) should sign their first senior contract with the club that developed them.

When Anelka asserted his right to move to get first-team football, he challenged the whole system. If PSG did not let Anelka go, they risked a legal battle. If they released him, there was a precedent for other young players to leave the clubs where they grew up.

In the end, PSG gave in. Arsenal paid compensation and Anelka arrived at Highbury in February 1997, five months ahead of schedule. Wenger said: "Under the Bosman ruling, we felt we had the right to Nicolas's signature. But I'm glad that we didn't have to get involved in a lengthy legal test case."

After a shaky start, and anxieties about settling in England, Anelka has prospered at Highbury. Meanwhile, others analysed the circumstances of his transfer. They decided that more French youngsters were there for the taking.

In January 1998, Milan signed teenage defender Samir Beloufa from Cannes, and Bari snapped up Rennes midfielder Gregory Campi. That summer, Inter raided France for four players – goalkeeper Sebastian Frey from Cannes, Mickael Silvestre and Ousmane Dabo of Rennes, and Saint-Etienne's Zoumana Camara.

Cagliari signed Cannes defender Jonathon Zabina, then the Spanish clubs came calling. Montpellier midfielder Jean-Philippe Savary joined Valencia, and another Rennes teenager, forward Elie Kroupi, went to Espanyol.

In January, Newcastle imported one of Anelka's old PSG colleagues, defender Didier Domi, and then striker Louis Saha from Metz soon after. Liverpool followed up in February by signing Laval's teenage defender Djimi Traore. And 21-year-old Thierry Henry has left Monaco for Juventus in the biggest deal of them all.

French football looked askance at the departure of its brightest youngsters. But the transfer that really raised the temperature came at schoolboy level. Jeremie Aliadiere was only 15, in his second year at the national youth academy, when Arsenal showed interest.

Aliadiere has since signed a seven-year contract at Highbury – a move that caused uproar in France.

Sports Minister Marie-Georges Buffet said that deals like this were an "attack on the ethics of sport". The French federation launched an investigation to identify an alleged 'network' at the academy, which it believes is paid by foreign clubs to spot the best young talent.

> **"As Anelka has prospered, so other clubs have decided that more French youngsters are there for the taking"**

Meanwhile, as Anelka was scoring his first Premiership hat-trick in Arsenal's 5-0 win over Leicester, Mme Buffet was preparing two bills to place before France's National Assembly. The first proposes to ban commercial transactions involving minors in sport. The second proposes that players at youth academies *must* sign their first senior contract with the club that has developed them.

"The Aliadiere case is not unique," said Buffet. "We know that in football circles there are people who spot young talent and get involved in trafficking."

Buffet's proposals may please her audience at home, but they're likely to run into problems. The Bosman judgment showed that European law supersedes individual FA rules. Recent cases also suggest that EU employment laws take precedence over national equivalents – like Buffet's second draft bill. The lawyers could have a field day arguing about that.

Such abstract discussions are a world away from Nicolas Anelka's scoring feats. But it was his move to Highbury that unwittingly spawned them.

HAPPY – OR HOMESICK – AT HIGHBURY?

NICOLAS ANELKA plainly is a young man who wears his heart on his sleeve. He was never backward in coming forward at Paris Saint-Germain, when he was wont to complain vociferously if left out of the team.

Now in London, he seems perpetually to be giving out conflicting signals. One moment, saying how lonely and unhappy he is, the next, insisting that he will see out the full four years of his Arsenal contract.

Anelka has bought a home in North London with his brother Claude, who is also his agent. But last month he admitted: "I have no friends. When I finish training I just stay at home and maybe listen to music."

Then there have been the periodic public attacks on the two Arsenal Dutchmen, Dennis Bergkamp and Marc Overmars, for allegedly not passing him the ball. Anelka reportedly accused Overmars of supplying "passes that make me run around like a dog".

But the Frenchman has responded to the criticism and uncertainty in the best possible way – with goals. Last season he replaced the injured Ian Wright and helped Arsenal win the Double, scoring the killer goal in the FA Cup Final against Newcastle at Wembley. This season, he has scored a dozen Premiership goals, at press time, and only three men have a higher tally.

His display for France against England has boosted his confidence and may have banished his homesickness. "Ask him now if he's unhappy," said Bergkamp. "He's still very young. He's playing on one of the biggest stages in the world, away from home, and he's doing very well. He's taking more of his chances than he did last season, and he's scoring crucial goals at crucial moments."

Andre Duclos

On target...for club (inset) and country

Parma karma

Parma's reincarnation as Serie A contenders continues. This year could be their best yet, says Paddy Agnew

COULD THIS be the year when the provincial Cinderella will finally get to go to the ball? For Parma, a city hitherto better known for cheeses, hams and opera, this could be the season that marks the culmination of a remarkable rise and rise from the nether regions of Italian soccer.

This season has thrown up a remarkably wide open Serie A contest and one that many believe will end the stranglehold on the title of the two post-war giants, Milan and Juventus, who between them have won 13 of the last 20 championships, including all the last seven. Now, Parma are clearly in with an outstanding chance to win the title, their first, along with Fiorentina and Lazio.

Parma represent one of the great success stories of Italian soccer in the 1990s. Founded in 1913, the club went 77 years before finally joining the Serie A elite in 1990-91. The obvious turning point in the club's recent history came in 1988 when self-made millionaire Calisto Tanzi, owner of Parma-based food and dairy products giant Parmalat, decided to take over the club, becoming de facto owner/sponsor.

Tanzi and Parmalat were not new to sports sponsorship, having had links with Formula One and having sponsored Real Madrid for a season in the mid-1980s. It took no Einstein to predict that if a company as well-run and successful as Parmalat were to get serious about their home-town football team, then things were about to happen. Serious money would be available, for a start.

Things did, indeed, happen.

Within two seasons of the takeover, Parma were in Serie A, finishing sixth and qualifying for the UEFA Cup in their first season in Division One. Under the guidance of canny coach Nevio Scala, who had won them promotion from Serie B, Parma looked like immediate Grade A officer material, not only in Serie A but also in Europe. So it proved. Between 1992 and 1995, the club won the Italian Cup, the Cup-winners Cup, the European Supercup and the UEFA Cup.

During the Scala years (1989-96), no season was more dramatic or traumatic than 1994-95, when the side fought neck and neck all the way for the title with a Juventus team then in its first season under coach Marcello Lippi.

The titanic struggle was engaged on three fronts – Serie A, the Italian Cup and the UEFA Cup. Juventus won the League, but only after a mighty battle which saw an exhausted Parma finish third. Scala's boys picked up some not insignificant compensation by beating Juventus in the UEFA Cup Final before again losing to the 'Old Lady' in the Italian Cup Final.

Throughout the early 1990s, two men – club president Giorgio Pedraneschi and Scala – had been key figures in Parma's ongoing development. The club, however, changed direction in a radical manner in the summer of 1996 when Stefano Tanzi, son of Parmalat boss Calisto, was appointed president. At the same time, the former Roma and Milan midfielder Carlo Ancelotti took over as coach.

At 30 years of age, Stefano Tanzi is still the youngest president in Serie A. As well as the new manager, he brought to the club new energies, fresh ambitions and Parmalat money. Yet, despite two relatively successful seasons (Parma were second to Juve in 1997 and sixth last season), Ancelotti got the old heave-ho last June, an apparent victim of the club's thirst for the scudetto.

This season has been one of partial rebuilding. The current successful strike partnership of Argentinian Hernan Crespo and Enrico Chiesa was already in place, as were the defensive talents of Frenchman Lilian Thuram, Argentinian Nestor Sensini and Fabio Cannavaro.

The new elements came in the shape of ex-Fiorentina coach Alberto Malesani, a new midfield and a new tactical approach.

Parma presented Malesani with a wonderful welcoming gift – the Argentinian playmaker Juan Veron, arguably one of the best in his role in the world and bought from Sampdoria for an estimated £13million. Veron's role as 'maker and shaker' just behind the front two men means that Parma effectively play with a three-man attack.

With Thuram, Sensini (or Luigi Sartor) and Cannavaro representing a solid defence (the one which by the end of February had conceded fewest goals), Malesani is able to line out a four-man midfield in which the two central players (Dino Baggio and Alain Boghossian) offer defensive cover while the two wide players (Diego Fuser, Antonio Benarrivo or Mario Stanic) alternate the role of winger with that of full-back.

In short, this season's Parma have changed from Ancelotti's much-loved 'Sacchi-style' 4-4-2 to a 3-4-1-2, which, after some inevitable initial hiccups, helped the club go into March still in contention in three contests – the title race, Italian Cup and UEFA Cup, in which they face Bordeaux in the quarter-finals.

In theory, Parma have all the requirements for title success – a powerful owner, a talented coach, an impressive squad of world-class players and, above all, the collective hunger of a club that has never won the title. In the first half of the season, too, they have done well, beating Juventus (twice), Fiorentina, Milan and Inter. Indeed, their first win against Juventus in Turin, in early February, a 4-2 drubbing, prompted the resignation of Marcello Lippi, who, ironically, has been replaced by former Parma coach Ancelotti.

New man in charge...Parma coach Alberto Malesani

An impressive UEFA Cup run, which has seen them eliminate Fenerbahce, Wisla Krakow and Rangers, also augurs well. Yet, two question marks hang heavily over Parma's title ambitions.

First, they still face away games with all their title rivals. Second, and perhaps more importantly, it remains to be seen just how significant was their 3-1 home defeat by Lazio at the exact halfway point of the season. Was that one of those crunch games which, in the long run, will prove to have been crucial in the designation of the 1999 title?

That remains to be seen. What is sure is that if Parma do not win the title this season, they are going to be around knocking at the door for the forseeable future.

One day soon, the city that, until now, has been best known as the birthplace of Giuseppe Verdi as well as the home of delicious hams and cheeses will be home to the champions of Italian soccer. ▶

On the charge ...veteran striker Abel Balbo

Veron: 'Give me another 10

The team's Argentinian playmaker talks to Dominique Antognoni

WORLD SOCCER: There are so many young Argentinian players flooding across to Europe and scoring goals. Is that just a coincidence?

JUAN SEBASTIAN VERON: It's more a case of a tradition, like Brazilian footballers. But there's another factor. In Argentina the clubs don't have the money to invest in big-money transfers. So everyone depends on finding young players, who have to grow up quickly. That explains why you can be only 17 or 18 and yet be an established first-teamer – much younger than you would be in Europe.

How did you manage to adjust so successfully and quickly to Italian football?

First, because in Argentina half the population have Italian family backgrounds. So we feel at home very quickly over here. We don't get homesick, the way the Brazilians do.

Who is your hero?

Diego Maradona. He was the greatest of all time for me. He *was* football. As for what happened to him, well, everyone has to make his own choices in life. It's not for me to judge him – or anyone else for that matter.

High ambition...Veron believes that he can win the Serie A title with Parma

Which have been your most memorable games so far in Italy?

The best was while I was with Sampdoria, two years ago, and we beat Perugia 5-3. I scored twice. The worst game so far was a 3-0 defeat by Lazio last season – the coach [Cesar Menotti] was sacked afterwards. The best goal I have scored was two years ago when Sampdoria beat Udinese 4-1. As for other memorable games, then I suppose the most significant was my debut in the World Cup, against Japan. I played badly. I was so emotional.

Why don't you shoot for goal as often as you used to?

There are lots of reasons. The first is that with Sampdoria I played further forward so I had more opportunities. Now, with Parma, I play with my back to goal much more, and thus I have more to do: first I have to turn, then shoot. The close marking in Italy is so effective – they don't give you room to breathe – that it's difficult to get enough space.

Which role do you prefer?

They're different, and you can't compare them because of the different needs of the two teams. With Parma, I have the responsibility of directing the play. The two strikers, Crespo and Chiesa or Balbo, depend heavily on me, for assists, for through passes. At Sampdoria, I played as a more traditional midfielder. But obviously the two teams have or had different objectives. At Samp, the best we could hope for was to qualify for the UEFA Cup the following season, and we played more to entertain than for the result. With Parma, we could win the title. That makes the responsibility much greater.

The coach at Parma, Alberto Malesani, gets you working hard, doesn't he?

Yes, but I feel quite capable. I am very fit thanks to our excellent work in pre-season training. When a game is over I feel tired but not worn out. Anyway, that's part of the game in Italy: run, run, run – whatever your position.

Do you wish you had stayed at Sampdoria?

I was very happy there. The first year was really fantastic. I would have stayed there happily. I liked the city and I got on well with the fans, but the club did not want to win badly enough. I had reached a stage in my career when I wanted more out of the game. I wanted to win something. If I had just wanted to enjoy my football then I could have stayed in Argentina. But there is more to football than that for me. So I decided to accept the transfer to Parma, though there had been a lot of talk about Lazio going for me.

Looking back, how do you feel about the World Cup?

I don't feel disappointed, more bitter. We could have reached the semi-finals. That was our aim. But we had to face the two strongest teams – apart from France – in England and Holland. We beat England on penalties, but we paid a heavy price for having to go all the way through 120 minutes because we were not then strong enough to withstand the last minutes against Holland.

The Argentinian media accused the squad of all sorts of things before you

years'

had even left for France. Why was there such a critical campaign?
We players paid a very heavy price for the fact that the coach, Daniel Passarella, was not popular with the media. So they attacked us as a way of attacking him. It's hard to understand because a good performance, a good result, was important for the country.

You were accused of having failed a dope test before the finals, yet you did not comment. Why?
Look, even when the media attacked us before the World Cup we decided to concentrate only on the football. That is why we made no reply to any of the nonsense.

Which team surprised you?
Croatia. They both surprised me and impressed me.

Who disappointed you?
Brazil. They kept going only thanks to Rivaldo and Ronaldo.

Which player impressed you?
Lizarazu.

Did Zidane deserve to be voted FIFA Footballer of the Year?
Not everyone scores two goals in a World Cup Final. Not even Maradona managed that. I thought there were four players all equally outstanding: Thuram, Ronaldo, Batistuta and Zidane, and Zidane won because he scored those two goals. But I must say he was also outstanding in the Italian League.

Are you in favour of holding the World Cup every two years?
No. The World Cup should remain a distant objective. Four years between tournaments is just right.

How did you get on with Passarella?
Well – even though we argued at first. He gives the impression of being tough, but when you get to know him you find there's a lot more to the man. He instilled a good spirit within the squad. We still talk on the phone.

Do you know the new national coach, Marcelo Bielsa?
No, I had never seen or heard him before he got the job. He has to put his own stamp on his team – either by changing tactics or by changing players, or both. Hopefully he'll remember me when our friendly against Holland at the end of March comes around.

It's been said that your dream is a transfer to Barcelona. Is that true?
Who does not dream of playing for one of the world's great clubs one day? It's the same for any player with serious ambition – to play for Barcelona, for Inter, for Milan, or Juventus, or Real Madrid, or Manchester United. These clubs have built the history of football. It would be wonderful to wear such a shirt.

But for now you're happy at Parma?
Of course. Why not? Everything's going so well. I'm still only 23. I get paid well for doing something I enjoy – paid so well that I can take good care of myself, my family and my friends. Yes, I'm very happy. I hope I feel exactly the same when I'm still kicking a football 10 years from now.

Bright future...Gianluigi Buffon

GOALKEEPER

Gianluigi BUFFON
Born 28.01.78. Now in his fourth season in Serie A, he had a spectacular debut as a 17-year-old in November 1995, in a 0-0 home draw with Milan. Buffon is nothing less than a foundation stone for future Parma success. A bright international future also beckons – he is currently No 2 to Angelo Peruzzi of Juventus.

DEFENDERS

Lilian THURAM (Fra)
01.01.72. The whole world saw for itself last summer just why many consider World Cup-winner Thuram one of the best defenders in Serie A. Under coach Malesani, he has licence to move forward and this he often does to deadly effect.

Nestor SENSINI (Arg)
12.10.66. Coaches as diverse as Nevio Scala, Carlo Ancelotti and Alberto Malesani have all come to realise that when utility player Sensini is in the team, Parma play better. Now in his 11th season in Serie A, and nothing if not a key figure.

Fabio CANNAVARO
13.09.73. One of the few Italians to emerge from France 98 with his reputation enhanced. Cannavaro's partnership with Thuram, Sensini and Buffon forms the solid platform on which Parma's success is built.

Luigi SARTOR
30.01.75. A £3.5million buy from Inter last summer, but regularly kept out of the side by Sensini. Nonetheless, he is a top-class player whose contribution could prove telling.

Roberto MUSSI
25.08.63. Solid campaigner who played in the 1994 World Cup Final, but whose role at Parma is that of experienced reserve.

Antonio BENARRIVO
21.08.68. Experienced full-back-cum-wide-midfielder whose willingness to get to the opponent's byline has made him an automatic first choice this season.

MIDFIELDERS

Diego FUSER
11.11.68. Many were surprised when Parma dished out some £4m for this ex-Lazio, ex-Milan player last summer. However, Fuser seems to have benefited from the move, playing some of the best soccer of his career.

Dino BAGGIO
24.07.71. Another highly experienced player, Baggio is a tough and consistent central midfielder who can construct and destruct, win ball and distribute it, close down an opponent and get forward to score. Definitely in the 'every-coach-wants-a-player-like-him' category.

Alain BOGHOSSIAN (Fra)
27.10.70. Despite a tendency to be static, World Cup-winner Boghossian has often been a first choice this season, thus justifying last summer's £5m purchase from Sampdoria.

Stefano FIORE
14.04.75. Much more dynamic and creative than Boghossian, and has replaced him to telling effect on several occasions this season. With him, Parma gain offensively but lose out defensively.

Mario STANIC (Cro)
10.04.72. A gutsy, right-sided attacking midfielder who can double up as a striker, and once scored 20 First Division goals in a season with Club Brugge. Can be lethal in the air, while his combative attitude makes him a deadly second-half substitute.

Paolo VANOLI
12.08.72. Useful squad member who can step in on the left side of midfield to telling effect. Bought from Verona last summer.

Juan Sebastian VERON (Arg)
09.03.75. One of the few players on the world scene to deserve the label 'playmaker', Veron is the shaker and maker at Parma. Fearless, tireless, blessed with soccer vision and intelligence, he looks worth every penny of the £13m Parma reportedly paid Sampdoria for him last summer. Previously with Estudiantes and Boca Juniors in Argentina.

FORWARDS

Enrico CHIESA
29.12.70. Still one of the most talented Italian strikers around, Chiesa has (so far) been overshadowed this season by his partner, Hernan Crespo. But although Chiesa is not scoring as frequently as the Argentinian, his pace and ability to run at defenders make him a key element in Parma's success.

Hernan CRESPO (Arg)
05.07.75. For a long time, former Argentina coach Daniel Passarella picked Crespo in preference to none other than Gabriel Batistuta. On his outstanding form this season, you can see why. Without doubt among the four or five best strikers in Serie A.

Abel BALBO (Arg)
01.06.66. Now in the sunset years of a distinguished career (113 goals in Serie A), Balbo showed that he has not

Top form...Hernan Crespo

forgotten how to do the business when coming off the bench in January to score a hat-trick against Piacenza. His intelligence and experience, on and off the pitch, have proved invaluable.

Faustino ASPRILLA (Col)
10.11.69. Enigmatic, wayward, unpredictable and largely kept on the sidelines. Yet Asprilla's innate talents may have their say in this busy Parma season.

Compiled by Paddy Agnew

Louis the first

For Amsterdam, read Barcelona. Keir Radnedge reports on Louis Van Gaal's continuing reign of success

LOUIS VAN GAAL has been called a lot of things in his time – obstinate, arrogant and ruthless being three of the more polite.

But he is also something else very specific and, in a football context, crucial: he is a winner. The choices he has made have proved, more or less, to be the right ones. For critics he has no time, even if the name happens to be Johan Cruyff.

Van Gaal grew up in a very different, more pragmatic Ajax generation than the young Cruyff. Whereas Cruyff and his total football soulmates of the early 1970s commanded at home and abroad through sheer weight of talent, Van Gaal joined the coaching staff a decade or so later when financial stringency had compromised the philosophy.

Cruyff, the football purist, could afford to go through the Barcelona experience as player and coach and say: "Attack is the safest tactic. If I am in the opposition half and I have the ball and I stretch his defenders all over the pitch, there is no way he can score."

Van Gaal, the football pragmatist, insists: "It's always more complicated to attack than to defend."

Where the paths of both men cross are on the subject of discipline, but even then the accent is different. For Cruyff, it meant tactical discipline. For Van Gaal, it means personal self-discipline. British visitors could never understand why Cruyff used Gary Lineker, sharpest English goal-poacher of his era, as a touchline-hugging outside-right. But Cruyff was never fazed. He expected all his players to develop a versatility that complemented their natural talent. Playing Lineker wide right meant Barcelona used the full width of the pitch, thereby dictating that an opposing defender follow Lineker out there, creating spaces elsewhere. It was chess with human pieces.

Cruyff made his mistakes. The most fatal was in under-estimating Milan at the 1994 Champions League Final, when the Italians took Barcelona apart 4-0, quite sensationally. Cruyff made Andoni Zubizarreta, the veteran Basque goalkeeper, his public scapegoat. Ironically, it proved the beginning of the end not for Zubi but for Cruyff himself. His rapport with president Jose Luis Nunez was never the same after that.

And the relationship between coach and president is crucial. They do not have to like each other. They do not have to understand each other. They do not have to agree with each other's opinions. But each man relies on the other to keep his nerve. Thus Cruyff in his time and now Van Gaal have been able to rely on Nunez – as Van Gaal believes he would never have been able to rely on Real Madrid's Lorenzo Sanz.

"Before I came to Barcelona I was offered the Real Madrid job several times," says Van Gaal. "I could have seen myself in the Bernabeu, had I wanted to. But I didn't because of their personality. It was something about the way they did business, the structure of the club in general. Also, the personality of the president in particular – something that, for me, is highly important."

One vote in favour of Nunez, one vote against Sanz.

So, another adjective may be applicable to Van Gaal – loyal. Having committed to Nunez, and seen Nunez commit himself in response, Van Gaal follows the party whip without stopping to worry. The saga concerning the possible departure of forward Roger Garcia to Monaco underlined the point. Monaco wanted Garcia, who held no role of any value in Van Gaal's plans. That decided, Van Gaal trusted his club to despatch the matter (and the player).

But it was not so easy. Roger did not want to go, did not like Monaco's terms and felt that being eased out in mid-season was the ultimate insult. Van Gaal, having made his decision, had no time for such games.

He said: "The squad know where I stand. I've told them exactly what I want and expect and need. If some players want to stay and are not happy because they are not playing then this is a problem for them. I know it is as complicated to move players out as it is to bring them in. But in Roger's case, the club have done all they can to help him." By this, Van Gaal meant that Barcelona had agreed to negotiate a transfer fee and not stick to the buy-out clause in Garcia's contract.

3-0...Barça's defeat of Real Madrid was emphatic

Another contrast between Van Gaal and Cruyff is in the fluency with which their respective Barcelona sides play. The 3-2 home win over struggling Santander, which provided Van Gaal with a personal record-equalling sixth successive win, was probably the worst League match – technically and tactically – that I have ever seen in Camp Nou.

It will live long in the memory, however, for one of the worst pieces of refereeing anywhere at the top level in Europe this season.

In the 53rd minute, with the score at 2-2, Rivaldo shot powerfully from close range, only to see Santander's Jesus Merino leap to his left and stretch up both hands to push the ball over the bar. It was a magnificent save. However, since Merino was the sweeper he should have been sent off and Barcelona awarded the penalty that would almost certainly have put them in command.

Astonishingly, referee Manuel Diaz Vega – one of the world's top officials – and his linesman missed the incident completely, not only failing to penalise Merino but adding insult to injury by awarding Santander a goal kick. The incident stupified Rivaldo and the crowd but typified what was a nightmarish evening for Barcelona, despite their win. They conceded two soft, counter-attack goals, to Santander's Victor and Pedro Munitis, and recovered thanks only to an own goal from the embattled Merino and a Frank De Boer header.

De Boer was sent off for a late tackle, evening up the numbers because Santander's Olaf Mellberg was shown the red card in the first half – another disgraceful decision by Diaz Vega – after falling victim to a Patrick Kluivert dive. Four minutes from time Barcelona finally secured the three points with a goal from Philip Cocu.

The match, however, was hardly an ideal dish to set before the great and the good of the world game who had flown in for the FIFA Gala the following day.

Van Gaal had no illusions. "We played badly and won," he said. "I cannot believe that Santander equalised when they were down to 10 men. If you have more players you should find it easier to hold the ball. For some reason we did not do that. We have a lot of work ahead of us."

Late in the game, Van Gaal sent on first Boudewijn

Zenden in place of Kluivert, to stretch the Santander right flank, and then Roger's brother, Oscar Garcia – to the ironic delight of the fans – in the centre of attack. Not that Van Gaal, of course, would concede that he had made the change for any reason other than to vary Barcelona's attacking shape. "I take all my decisions only for the good of the team," he said. "That's my job as coach… and, you see, it was the right decision. That's all."

More right decisions piled on top of each other in succeeding weeks, reaching a happy climax with the 3-0 home win over Real Madrid which earned Barcelona the unofficial media accolade of 'virtual champions'.

Beating Madrid – fatally weakened after the expulsion of Roberto Carlos for a wild tackle on Luis Figo – provided Barça with their eighth straight League victory. Two first-half goals from Luis Enrique and another from Rivaldo ensured a comfortable and convincing victory over their bitter rivals.

Van Gaal tried to hold the euphoria in check, saying: "I don't know if we are going to be champions. Maintaining this run will be very difficult."

Then triumphalism got the better of even the Dutchman. "We were the better team by a very large margin," he conceded. "I was surprised at the distance in quality. But I also believe that, in the first 20 minutes, we played some of the best football you will have seen in Spain this season. It was a great team performance by a side who looked capable of producing something at any moment."

Normally between eight and 10 million Spaniards watch the match live on television, but this year it was broadcast on pay-per-view for the first and, according to an embarrassed government, last time. Only 250,000 viewers paid the £8 fee, which encouraged ministers to promise that the law will be changed so that "sports events of national importance" must be available to all viewers.

What the rest of Spain missed was a further significant addition to the roll of honour of Louis Van Gaal, which is likely to have another Spanish League title included come the season's end in May.

Barcelona, about to celebrate their centenary with a friendly against Brazil, were founded by a Swiss, Hans Gamper. But the start of the second century of Barça will owe everything to a Dutchman.

Title in sight…Van Gaal can take Barça to another championship win

World-beaters...Argentina's young stars celebrate their triumph over Uruguay in the Final of the 1997 tournament in Malaysia

'Safe and secure'

Keir Radnedge hopes Nigeria can live up to its promise as the World Youth Cup goes ahead

NIGERIA made the international mainstream in 1994, when they played in the World Cup finals for the first time. Not only did they get to the second round, but they also very nearly defeated the ultimate runners-up, Italy, before losing 2-1 in extra time.

The promise shown by the sparkling performances of players such as Sunday Oliseh, Daniel Amokachi and Finidi George was undeniable. But over the next few years, the twists and turns of the international game were unkind to the Nigerians.

They had won the African Nations Cup in 1994 but refused to go to South Africa two years later to defend their crown after a political row, ostensibly blamed on security uncertainties within Nelson Mandela's rainbow nation. The late withdrawal provoked Nigeria's suspension from the 1998 African Nations championship.

The federation could hardly take a step in any direction without hitting political minefields.

European Union concern over the country's human rights record led the French authorities to try to bar Nigeria's delegation from attending the draw for the 1998 World Cup qualifying competition, in December 1995. Only after Joao Havelange, then FIFA president, threatened to take the draw – if not the entire World Cup – away from France did the French relent.

Tug-of-war...Robbie Keane

Havelange's relations with Nigeria had long been controversial. He was in the country as a guest of the late dictator Sani Abacha at the same time as a noted writer and environmental protester was executed. But the reason for Havelange's presence has echoes which remain relevant: he was on a diplomatic mission to smooth over relations between the governments of Nigeria and world football in the wake of FIFA's short-notice withdrawal of the World Youth Cup from Nigeria in 1995.

The official reason for a late change of venue to Qatar was health concerns, although it was also widely reported at the time that FIFA felt Nigeria had not made enough progress on overall preparations.

FIFA promised that Nigeria would be given another chance, and this was duly provided with the award of the 1999 World Youth Cup, to be staged from April 3-24.

Not that Nigeria's football authorities are awash with money. The sports ministry was aghast at a £60,000 bill for travel costs and bonuses after a 2-0 win over Burundi in the recent African Nations qualifiers and new national coach Thijs Libregts has been ordered to cut the number of players based abroad that he selects.

A nucleus at the NFA has worked hard to revive the country's international profile – a task assisted by the senior national team's progress to the second round of France 98. It was also helped by a surprise statement of intent in January this year that it would join the bidding race to stage the 2006 World Cup finals.

"Whatever other people may say, Nigeria stands a good chance," said an NFA official, explaining that FIFA had accepted the bid even though the formal letter did not arrive in Zurich until after the December 31 deadline. But already it appears that South Africa – the first African challenger in the 2006 bidding contest – has persuaded Nigeria to stand down.

If nothing else, this means the NFA can concentrate all its efforts on preparing for the World Youth Cup, although it remains uncertain of the quality of the 23 visiting nations. Argentina and Brazil probably will be favourites, while the European challenge appears likely to be undermined by a mixture of factors.

One is continuing concern over health and accommodation provisions in Nigeria. More significant is the timing of the event. Few European clubs are dancing with joy at the prospect of losing their most promising young players at the climax of the domestic season. The Republic of Ireland, for example, have told Wolves that they will insist on their right to take all their best players, such as Robbie Keane. But England, according to FA technical director Howard Wilkinson, will be more accommodating.

Wilkinson hinted in January that not only would he seek extended assurances over the political situation, but also that he might overlook more than two dozen

of his top youngsters – including the likes of Michael Owen, Gareth Barry, Alan Smith, Jonathan Woodgate, Jody Morris, Joe Cole and Wes Brown – to placate Premier and Football League clubs.

He said: "Along with the other European and American countries, we have sought assurances from FIFA as to any concerns we have. The indications are that these assurances will be given. Having said that, preparations will be of the highest order and money will not be a factor in terms of health and welfare."

Wilkinson outlined his exclusion criteria as being "players who are involved with a first-team squad on a week-to-week basis". But he added: "I have gone as far as I can and now we have to work through it. I have a reasonable rapport with most managers. The solution we have reached is as ideal as it can be. It would have been futile to start a war concerning the release of first-team players."

At the end of January FIFA sent an inspection team to Nigeria under the leadership of Jack Warner, Trinidadian president of the Central and North American confederation.

Initial impressions were not good. Veteran FIFA official Walter Gagg described hotels in Ibadan as "poor", while Warner criticised the absence of floodlights, scoreboards and practice pitches in Calabar and Port Harcourt.

The overall impression, however, was optimistic. Warner said: "The message I can give to the world is that the safety concerns of 1995 aren't here any more."

To be honest, political sensitivity within FIFA towards all issues African is such that there was no way Nigeria would *not* stage the World Youth Cup this time around.

"We're sure the event will go well," says spokesman Paul Bassey. "Nowhere is perfect, that's why we've had problems with our preparations. But since last year when our new president, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, took over, Nigeria has become very safe and secure."

The world hopes so.

THE TEAMS

EUROPE
Rep of Ireland
Germany
Croatia
Portugal
Spain
England

SOUTH AMERICA
Argentina
Uruguay
Brazil
Paraguay

ASIA
South Korea
Japan
Saudi Arabia
Kazakhstan

CONCACAF
USA
Costa Rica
Mexico
Honduras

AFRICA
Four from the qualifying competition in Ghana, Feb 21-Mar 7

OCEANIA
Australia

HOSTS
Nigeria

PRO-FILE

Main man

Brazilian midfielder Alex was the pick of the 1997 crop, says Tim Vickery

MENTION the World Youth Cup to Alex and a broad smile breaks over his face. "I have some very happy memories," he says, casting his mind back to the last tournament in Malaysia two years ago.

"It was a wonderful experience for all of us," he recalls. "We built up a great friendship in the squad, and played some scintillating football. We were unlucky to lose [to eventual winners Argentina] in the quarter-finals and on the whole the balance has to be positive. The team did well, and I did well individually."

Indeed he did. Midfielder Alex was one of the stars of a team who, until the clash with old rivals Argentina, had been brushing aside opponents with astonishing ease. They put 10 goals past South Korea in the group stage and repeated the feat against Belgium in the second round, with Alex scoring a hat-trick.

Their opening game was against France, whose attack was led by Thierry Henry and David Trezeguet – World Cup winners a year later – with Nicolas Anelka in reserve. "That was a very strong team," Alex remembers. "For me it was an illustration of the physical strength and tighter marking of European football." But he learned quickly how to overcome it, scoring after only four minutes to put Brazil on the way to a 3-0 win.

As well as the French stars, Brazil also crossed swords with Benni McCarthy of South Africa before going out to a team from which Walter Samuel and Juan Roman Riquelme have since graduated to the senior Argentina squad, with many others poised to follow them.

Alex, though, is the only one from his squad to have made it through the ranks to the full Brazil team. Many have yet to establish themselves as first-team starters for their clubs, let alone their country.

"You have to remember that the level of competition in Brazil is much higher," Alex points out. "The country is so big and produces so many players that it's difficult to make comparisons. OK, so Michael Owen played in Malaysia and went on to shine in the World Cup, but how many other great young talents does England produce? In Brazil, it never stops."

Alex, now 21, deserves great credit for making the transition to full international status so swiftly. Behind this achievement lies not only huge talent, but also steely determination. "A few years ago I was called up to the Brazil Under-17s," he recalls. "I didn't make it through to the final squad, and at that moment I sat down and worked out a plan for myself.

"I decided there was no way I'd be left out of the World Youth Cup, and I would make that my stage to move on to the Olympics and the full national team. So far, it's all going to plan. The Olympics is next year and I hope to be involved, and I've already played for the national team."

For all the calculating approach, however, he was not averse to feeling star-struck when he was called up for Brazil's first game after France 98, a friendly against Yugoslavia. "The players were those I'd watched during the World Cup, and suddenly there I was alongside them, eating at the same table, discussing the same subjects."

He wasted no time in showing that his call-up was deserved, entering as a second-half substitute and kicking some urgency into a wilting team. A clever lob nearly turned a 1-1 draw into a victory and reinforced his growing reputation as a goalscoring midfielder. "It was a huge thrill to be on the same pitch as Rivaldo, whom I've always watched closely," says Alex.

Head start...Alex has risen above his Youth team-mates

While he has yet to develop the passing range of Rivaldo, Alex is more adept at operating in tight spaces – a skill he attributes to his grounding in indoor football.

"I spent 10 years working on the basics. That doesn't always happen with those who go straight to outdoor, 11-a-side football, where they tend to focus more on the physical side. Indoors, though, we worked for hours on giving passes with the right foot, then with the left. There was special emphasis on improving my weaker side."

As a result, the naturally left-footed Alex can hit first-time passes or crisp shots with either foot. With Palmeiras he has also developed the art of timing his runs into the penalty area to devastating effect.

Despite his slight build he has started scoring with his head, and was top scorer in last year's Mercosur Cup, disputed by 20 of South America's leading clubs and won by Palmeiras.

Future challenges could come on the other side of the Atlantic. "I would love a move to Europe," he confirms. "I could learn more about the game and develop in a tactical sense, as well as grow culturally, learning more about other ways of life."

With his combination of skill, determination and intelligence, it should not be long before Alex is gracing one of the big European leagues.

Fact file

Club Palmeiras
Country Brazil
Born September 1977, in Curitiba
Previous club Coritiba
International debut September 1998, v Yugoslavia
International caps 2
Honours Brazilian Cup 1998 (Palmeiras); Mercosur Cup 1998 (Palmeiras)

Twelth man...Boca fans provide an intimidating wall of sound around their team

Back on top

Eric Weil profiles Argentina's opening championship winners

BOCA JUNIORS have come a long way since they were formed by three students in La Boca, the port district of Buenos Aires, on April 3, 1905.

The students founded the club when sitting on a bench in a local park, and they decided that Boca would adopt the colours of the first ship to enter port on that day. It turned out to be a Swedish steamer with a blue and yellow funnel.

Soon Boca had became the most popular club in Argentina – marginally ahead of traditional rivals River Plate. They won the first professional championship in 1931, and last December they won the title for the 15th time, after an interval of six years. Today, the club have 44,000 members and millions of fans, referred to simply as 'the 12th player'.

It is true to say that Boca Juniors won the 1998-99 opening championship mainly because they wanted to and did everything towards that end, while other leading clubs did not. To make money, their rivals sold many of their best players, while Boca did the opposite, entering the transfer market to strengthen their team. At the same time they were building up the best youth programme in the country.

Boca's recent resurgence began when Mauricio Macri – from a rich industrial family and a Boca fan all his life – took over as club president almost three years ago. He promised to make the club the most successful in South America and his first act was to engage the country's leading junior team coach, Jorge Griffa.

But while the already large number of boys wanting to play for Boca increased and the club were winning junior division titles, things in the first team failed to click.

At first, Boca were led by World Cup-winning coach Carlos Bilardo, who made the club buy a virtually complete new team. Internal rifts did not help matters, and although Diego Maradona's return to the club in 1997 (he had won the title in his one season with them in 1981) may have increased crowds and membership, it did not greatly benefit the team.

A new coach, Hector Veira, gradually removed internal trouble-makers and, though discipline did not improve, he did bring in some good players – such as Martin Palermo, Guillermo Barros Schelotto and the Colombians Mauricio Serna, Jorge Bermudez and Oscar Cordoba – who today form the basis of the team.

With a virtually unchanged playing staff, this season's coach, Carlos Bianchi, found the key to success.

Under threat...Boca's La Bombonera stadium

The man who between 1993 and 1996 took Velez Sarsfield to numerous titles – including the Libertadores Cup and the World Club Cup – gave the players a more professional outlook by imposing discipline and ending internal rifts. In essence, he brought out the best in them with a low-key but firm attitude.

Players such as top scorer Palermo, Barros Schelotto and youngsters Walter Samuel and Juan Riquelme, although already Under-20 internationals, have improved no end. And the youth policy started by Macri has begun to bear fruit, with numerous players acquitting themselves well when coming into the side as cover for regular first-teamers. This was never more apparent than when Boca played with a reserve team in the Mercosur Cup and still reached the quarter-finals.

There is nothing complicated about Boca's tactics. They play with four at the back – the full-backs are always ready to go into attack – a stopper, two 'connecting' midfielders and another playing in behind the two strikers. As one defender moves up, another falls back, and it is the same with the midfielders.

This is hardly ground-breaking, but there are other specific reasons for Boca's success. First, they have the most lethal attacking duo in Argentinian soccer. Palermo, who can shoot with power from all angles and is good in the air, finds the open spaces from which to score, while Barros Schelotto's good ball control and vision enables him to draw a defender away from Palermo and supply him with a pinpoint pass.

Then there is the first XI's backbone of experienced Colombian internationals – goalkeeper Cordoba, defender Bermudez and stopper Serna – who are the team's only foreigners.

Boca have also been able to field a very settled side and, as a result of Bianchi's discipline, have had fewer players sent off than in previous seasons.

Finally, the team are very fit, a factor that has allowed them to secure many points in the second half of games when their rivals have begun to tire.

The club's stadium, La Bombonera (The Chocolate Box), which has been partially refurbished since Macri became president, holds 58,000 and is virtually full for all home matches. But it cannot be enlarged because houses surround it on all sides, and after its forthcoming conversion into an all-seater, to comply with FIFA regulations, it will hold only 38,000.

The option of moving to a new site is still being studied because next season it is unlikely that any tickets will be on sale, with all available places going to season-ticket holders. However, fans and members are opposed to relocating.

Only four of the Boca squad – Diego Cagna, Jose Basualdo, Barros Schelotto and Riquelme – had won caps before new national team coach Marcelo Bielsa took charge. Bielsa then named Samuel, Cagna, Palermo, Barros Schelotto and Hugo Ibarra in his first squad. Samuel duly scored the first goal of the coach's reign in the 2-0 friendly victory over Venezuela at the start of February. A week later, Barros Schelotto and Palermo formed the front pairing in Argentina's 1-0 win over Mexico in Los Angeles.

Bielsa was not the only one to recognise the talent at Boca. In the annual poll organised by Uruguayan newspaper *El Pais*, Palermo was named American Player of the Year 1998, and he along with Bermudez, Cagna and Serna made the All-Star American First XI.

In the same poll, made among 300 journalists from 56 countries, Carlos Bianchi was named top coach. Bianchi's contract runs until the end of next year, but he has said that if any player is sold without his agreement he will resign. In spite of offers for players from Europe, president Macri has agreed to comply with the coach's wishes, at least until the end of the season in June.

That should make Boca favourites to win the closing championship, and by next season they will have a wealth of talent from the junior ranks pressing for places.

TEAM FOCUS

THE COACH
Carlos BIANCHI
Born 26.04.49. Bianchi, now 49, was a prolific marksman as a player. He is still the all-time top scorer for Velez Sarsfield (206 goals) and he also headed the French First Division scoring list in five seasons during the 1970s, with Reims and Paris Saint-Germain. He failed to find success as a coach with Reims, but in his time in charge back at Velez he guided them to two Argentinian championships, the Libertadores Cup, in 1994, and the World Club Cup later that year. He coached Italy's Roma in 96-97 but did not last the season.

GOALKEEPER
Oscar CORDOBA
03.02.70. International who had his ups and downs during the season, even losing his place at one point. But a penalty save against River Plate restored his confidence and he was one of the outstanding factors during the second half of the tournament.

DEFENDERS
Hugo IBARRA
01.04.74. One of the few purchases for the season (from Colon de Santa Fe), he was bought to replace Nestor Fabbri (sold to Nantes). Ibarra took some time to adapt to the Boca style, but is now very reliable.

Jorge BERMUDEZ (Col)
18.06.71. Experienced international, vital in defence and dangerous when moving upfield.

Walter SAMUEL
23.03.78. One of the revelations of the season from the club's junior ranks. Despite his youth, he is the best defender in the team: a clean tackler with an elegant style. International debut against Venezuela in February.

Young talent...Juan Riquelme

Goals galore...top scorer Martin Palermo

Rodolfo ARRUABARRENA
20.07.75. Another product of the youth scheme and now a regular first-teamer. Consistent performer, a good marker and adept when moving upfield.

Cristian TRAVERSO
17.04.72. Excellent reserve for defensive and midfield positions.

Anibal MATELLAN
08.05.77. Another reserve who can provide important cover for defensive positions. Very fast.

Fernando ORTIZ
25.12.77. Outstanding reserve central defender who has come from the junior ranks.

MIDFIELDERS
Diego CAGNA
19.01.71. The low-key captain preferred by Bianchi. A hard worker, a good marker and threatening on the attack.

Mauricio SERNA (Col)
22.01.68. Hard-working international. Possibly the most consistent player in the team.

Jose BASUALDO
20.06.63. Veteran, former international who has frequently been used as a 'super sub'.

Fernando NAVAS
29.01.77. The revelation of the team early on in the season. Lost his place after suspension, but his hard work and vitality have made him a valuable sub.

Juan Ramon RIQUELME
24.06.78. Another product from the club's junior ranks. Was an outstanding playmaker in the Argentina Under-20 side who became world champions.

FORWARDS
Guillermo BARROS SCHELOTTO
04.05.73. One of the club's best buys. Outstanding ball control and speed are allied with an ability to both make goals and score them. His understanding with Martin Palermo has made them the outstanding attacking duo in Argentinian football.

Martin PALERMO
07.11.73. Although not too fast, this burly striker is quick to move into scoring positions, and he finishes from all angles with foot or head. Finished as top scorer in the opening championship with 20 goals.

Adrian GUILLERMO
15.03.80. Outstanding youth team product who is fast, intelligent and a good passer of the ball. A great future beckons.

Cristian GIMENEZ
01.02.81. Another junior team product who has shown potential in his few first-team appearances.

Argentina's current number 10 talks to Keyvan Antonio Heydari

WORLD SOCCER: Were Argentina good enough to win the World Cup?
ARIEL ORTEGA: I thought so before it started and I still think so. The World Cup is a very difficult tournament, but it is beautiful to play in. There are many great players, the best national teams are there, and I think Argentina had many good players. But you also face rivals that play very well. I think Argentina had a good World Cup. I hoped that we could be world champions, but it wasn't possible. Still, life must carry on.

It was your second World Cup. How did your mental approach change?
I wasn't scared because a World Cup is the greatest thing there is. In 1994 I was 20 years old and I wasn't a starter. This time I was a starter and people expected a lot of me; so did the coaches, so did I. I gave everything, as did the team, but it just wasn't possible to win.

Were France the best team?
No, but they were the steadiest team, the team that won when they had to win. But that was all, they weren't a brilliant team.

If France weren't the best, who were?
I can't say. France had excellent players, but weren't so good that you say, "OK, this team can beat anybody." I thought they were consistent. In fact, there were no teams that made you say, "This one will beat everybody." I thought the World Cup was very even.

Who was the best player?
I don't think there were that many players who dribbled very much, and I think that's what the people like. I don't think there was one single best player in the world.

What did you think of Michael Owen in your game against England?
Well, let's not exaggerate. He's not Maradona. But he's an excellent player and played very well against us.

But he's not really a typically English player...

ARIEL ORTEGA – LIFE AND TIMES

Rising star...at River Plate

In Maradona's footsteps

I haven't seen him play that much. Actually, I haven't seen him play since the World Cup. I'm basing what I say on what I saw in France. Yes, he is a good player because of his speed, because of the goal he scored against us. He surprised all of us, because he played very well that match. But let's not exaggerate.

Argentina had a difficult relationship with the press in France. How much did that affect the team?
I was completely focused. I didn't care what happened with the journalists, I just wanted to win the games. But I don't think that the tough time the team had from the press was good for our performance.

Did your sending off against Holland derail the team?
No, I don't think so, but with me on the field I think we would have had more chance of winning the match. I think that having an extra player is too much of an advantage in international football these days.

The Dutch brought you down, and you thought you were going to get a penalty?
Yes, it all happened so fast; I thought the referee was going to give a penalty and he didn't.

Did you realise Van der Sar's head was above yours?
It was an instinctive gesture. I just went like this [he gestures]. I didn't touch him. I swear, I didn't touch him. But he was smart.

Did Van der Sar fake the injury?
I didn't do anything to him. But he was intelligent and I am the one who made a mistake. I have admitted it. Football is for the smart people and I made a mistake.

Would you like to be able to handle your emotions better on the field?
I have only done what I did once and I'm sure it won't happen again. I have my emotions in check. It was just a moment where I made a mistake and that's that.

Has it occurred to you that Maradona was sent off in the 1982 World Cup and had his revenge four years later?
No, I hadn't remembered that. But things like this happen during a game, especially a tense game like the one against Holland.

Because Maradona had his revenge, maybe you'll have yours.
I hope so. Football always gives second chances.

You said that you and Marcelo Gallardo understand each other instinctively, but he didn't play against Holland. Maradona said that the saddest thing was that Argentina lost without playing the style of football they know best. Do you agree?
We lost and you have to accept the criticism. From the outside it's easy to criticise, especially since we lost. Gallardo is a vital player for us. He showed it when he played. But Passarella was the coach, he picked the players he thought were going to work, and it was his job to do that, not mine.

You were one of Passarella's golden boys. Did it hurt you to hear the criticism he received on his return home?
It's not so much that it hurt me but that I didn't like it. Everybody has a right to express their opinion; you just have to be professional about it and accept the criticism.

Now Bielsa is the national coach. Do you think it's very difficult to do that job properly in Argentina?
Maybe you need a lot of time to work out systems and schemes. Personally, I don't know much about Bielsa, but I've heard he's a hard worker.

Now you are in Genoa, far away from Argentina, but you give the impression of being a simple country kid.
I am a country lad, and I love my home town, Ledesma. Every time I have a vacation I go there because I feel very well there. They make me feel like a normal person, which is what I am. Nobody asks for autographs.

How is the pressure in Italy?
There's pressure everywhere. In Italy, in Spain. Nobody wants to lose. Without pressure you can't play.

It must make a difference that your old club River Plate are one of the biggest clubs in Argentina, while the same could not be said of Sampdoria in Italy. During the last game I saw, they left you to fend for yourself in attack. It can't be easy to play like that.
Of course not. Perhaps right now, since the team is not playing well, everybody notices the mistakes. But I believe the team is going to get better. Things are going to change. The season is long and things have to change, because they can't continue like this.

You have scored some spectacular goals. You can't deny that the big teams in Italy have an eye on you.
That's very nice, but I have to think about Sampdoria because I play for Sampdoria. They believed in me and that's why they bought me.

When did you realise you had special skills and talents?
You are born with that. Plus, I used to play from noon until eight in the evening. And if we hadn't had to have come inside to eat, I would have stayed out later. But you don't think, "I'm going to be a footballer."

If you were a coach and you were looking at yourself as a player, what would you say are Ortega's best attributes and what would you say was missing from his game?
My greatest attribute is dribbling at speed. But I'm missing many things. If I didn't make mistakes I would be Maradona. And there's only one Maradona.

March 4, 1974 Born in Ledesma, Argentina.
1991 Makes his debut for River Plate.
April 1994 Wins his first cap in a friendly against Morocco. Argentina win 3-1.
June 1994 Comes on as a substitute for Maradona in Argentina's first group game, against Greece, at the World Cup finals. Makes two more appearances – against Bulgaria and Romania.
June 1996 Wins the Libertadores Cup with River Plate.
August 1996 Part of Argentina's silver medal-winning team at the Atlanta Olympics. They lose out to Nigeria in the Final.
February 1997 Moves to Valencia for £7million.
1996-97 Misses only one of Argentina's 16 France 98 qualifiers, and finishes as their top scorer with four goals.
June-July 1998 Plays in all Argentina's games at the World Cup, scoring twice against Jamaica in the group stage. Sent off for butting Holland goalkeeper Edwin Van der Sar in the quarter-finals.
Summer 1998 Joins Sampdoria.

Ouch...butting Van der Sar at France 98

Italian style...with Sampdoria

Myth into reality?

Nick Bidwell assesses the qualification chances of a success-starved nation

Work to do...Ilias Poursanidis (right) and his Greece team-mates face a tough qualification struggle

DESPITE the intense emotions generated by football in the land of the Olympian, missing out on big-time appointments has proved a hard habit to break for the Greek national team.

Only two appearances at major international tournaments in nearly 80 years of competitive action – winless expeditions to the 1980 European Championship and USA 94 – tells its own sorry tale, and traditional Hellenic qualification blues have again risen to the surface on the way to Euro 2000.

Matters were meant to improve after a new national coach, highly-experienced Romanian Anghel Iordanescu, arrived last summer to replace Kostas Polihroniou. But the team have continued to be the essence of inconsistency. Points were squandered at home to Slovenia (2-2) and in Albania (0-0), and despite a 3-0 victory over Georgia in Athens last October, the Greeks will require some Herculean efforts if they are to reach their first Euro finals for 20 years.

Even so, there is still confidence among the squad that the situation can be turned around. After all, no other team in Greece's qualifying group has seized the initiative. Favourites Norway have carelessly tossed aside five points from their first two home fixtures, while Slovenia, Albania, Georgia and surprise leaders Latvia have all been beaten.

With morale boosted by victories over Finland and Belgium at the Cyprus tournament in February, the Greeks are only too aware that maximum points from a Euro 2000 double-header at the end of March – at home to Norway and away to Latvia four days later – will go a long way to confirming their presence at the finals. In short, it's make or break time.

"The only real disappointment was letting Slovenia off the hook in the first game of the qualifiers," claims star striker Nikos Mahlas. "Drawing in Albania wasn't a bad result because they are awkward opponents in Tirana. But the most important thing is that we are unbeaten so far.

"The games against Norway and Latvia could well determine the outcome of the group. We cannot afford any slips from now on. It's a very open group, but someone has to come through to dominate and I've a strong conviction it will be us.

"Our failure to take part in the last World Cup finals still haunts us. If we had beaten Denmark in our final tie, we would have been in the play-offs, but we could not manage to put away just one of the many chances we created that night and we were out. It rankles and we are all desperate to put matters right and reach Euro 2000."

Greek soccer's local difficulties are well-documented: the recurrent hooliganism, alleged match-fixing and the perilous financial state of many professional clubs. Yet on the playing side, there are unmistakable signs that their game is moving in the right direction.

As Mahlas noted, the national team were only narrowly edged out of qualification for France 98, by Denmark and Croatia, while an essentially home-grown Olympiakos side have underlined how competitive Greek players can be, by beating Ajax, FC Porto and Croatia Zagreb to a place in the quarter-finals of this season's Champions League.

"I know supporters of other Greek clubs are unlikely to appreciate this, but by getting to the last eight of Europe's biggest cup we have struck a blow for Greek football as a whole," says Olympiakos and Greece midfielder Ilias Poursanidis. "Now we know we have nothing to fear."

Equally significant is the growing band of Greek players operating abroad. A few years ago, self-sufficiency was the order of the day, with a national team exclusively made up of home-based men. Now the side are heavily dependent on half-a-dozen influential migrants.

Midfielder Theo Zagorakis and stopper Nikos Dabizas have won many admirers for their work in England with Leicester and Newcastle respectively, stylish playmaker Vassilis Tsartas is a favourite at Spanish club Sevilla, Marinos Ouzounidis has been in good form of late for Le Havre in France, and Nikos Mahlas is a Dutch League scoring sensation with Vitesse Arnhem.

Add prominent Greek League performers such as defender Yannis Kalitzakis, schemer Kostas Frantzeskos and front-runner Demis Nikolaidis, and you have a national line-up built for solid achievement.

Greece's rising generation is shaping up well, too. The Under-21 side turned the form book upside down by finishing as runners-up to Spain in last year's European Championship in Romania, and a number of those youngsters seem assured of a bright senior international future. Panathinaikos attacking midfielder Nikos Liberopoulos is already established in the full national team, while fellow schemers Paraskevas Antzas of Olympiakos and Georgios Karagounis of Panathinaikos should follow suit.

All this leaves coach Iordanescu with a more than decent hand and he knows it: "I had a successful time as coach of Romania, taking them to European and World Cup finals, including USA 94 when they reached the quarter-finals. I believe Greece can achieve similar things. The talent is in place here, though a certain degree of tactical work has to be done and a winning mentality needs to be developed.

"I certainly don't think I have accepted some sort of impossible challenge with Greece. I'm pleased to note that clubs in the principal European leagues are increasingly seeing Greek players as an attractive option. Those players will extend their football culture abroad and add another dimension to the national team.

"Why shouldn't Greece qualify for Euro 2000? The domestic game has improved beyond all recognition from when I played for OFI Crete in the Eighties. The players at my disposal are of good quality and we're in a manageable group. I'm confident we will be up to the task, as is the squad."

Alketas Panagoulias, who guided Greece to both Euro 80 and USA 94, used to dip into the nation's rich mythology for his pre-match rallying calls. Will Anghel Iordanescu complete his personal Odyssey?

Boss man...Anghel Iordanescu

THE COACH

Anghel IORDANESCU
Born: 04.03.50.
Appointed last summer after five exceptional years in charge of Romania, notably steering them to the quarter-finals of USA 94. As a player he gained 64 caps for Romania, starred in attack or midfield for Steaua Bucharest, and later became the club's most successful coach, winning the Champions Cup and Supercup in 1986, plus four domestic League titles.

GOALKEEPERS

Ilias ATMATZIDIS
24.04.69. AEK Athens. 8 caps.
Has been the country's undisputed first choice for four seasons. Joined AEK from Third Division Pontioi Verias in 1992.

Nikos MIHOPOULOS
20.02.70. PAOK Salonika. 12 caps.
Won his first cap as a substitute against Cyprus in January 1995 and has been a reliable deputy for Atmatzidis ever since. Now under pressure for his place from young Dimitrios leftheropoulos of Olympiakos.

DEFENDERS

Vassilis BORBOKIS
10.02.69. Sheffield Utd (Eng). 2 caps.
Skilful, adventurous right-back or wing-back who moved to Sheffield from AEK Athens last season. His future in Yorkshire is in some doubt after he recently upset club coach Steve Bruce for going absent without leave. Made his international debut against Russia in February 1998.

Nikos DABIZAS
03.08.73. Newcastle Utd (Eng).
26 caps.
Has settled extremely well in English football since arriving on Tyneside midway through last season from Olympiakos in a £2million deal. An outstanding central defender, he is strong in the air, quick and comfortable on the ball. Won first full cap in October 1994, against Finland.

Yannis KALITZAKIS
10.12.66. AEK Athens. 71 caps.
Uncompromising, uncomplicated and thoroughly effective defensive marker who has given over a decade of sterling service to the national team. Spent 10 years as the bulwark of the Panathinaikos rearguard before switching to AEK in 1996.

Mihalis KASSAPIS
06.06.71. AEK Athens. 28 caps.
Has lost a little ground in the pecking order since the advent of Iordanescu, but is a highly dependable and proficient left-back all the same. A former Under-21 star, Kassapis was drafted into the senior set-up in the immediate post-USA 94 period. Joined AEK from Levadiakos in 1993.

Dimitris MAVROGENIDIS
23.12.75. Olympiakos. 3 caps.
Right-back or right-sided midfielder who is one of the best young prospects in Greece. A key man for the Olympiakos side who have claimed the last two national titles and made excellent progress in this season's Champions League. Previously with Aris Salonika.

Marinos OUZOUNIDIS
10.10.68. Le Havre (Fra). 22 caps (2 gls).
Though his French club are involved in a relegation fight, Ouzounidis has been in fine form this term and has looked equally good for Greece, capping some sound displays with a rare goal in the 3-0 Euro 2000 win at home to Georgia. This stylish libero, who was previously with Xanthi and Panathinaikos, can also play in midfield.

Playmaker...Vassilis Tsartas

MIDFIELDERS

Kostas FRANTZESKOS
04.01.69. PAOK Salonika. 28 caps (6 gls).
One of the old guard who gets better with every year. A former Panathinaikos and OFI Crete player, he is renowned for his classy left-foot and goals from free-kicks – he scored a long-range special against Slovenia in the Euro 2000 qualifier. Won his first cap for Greece in September 1992, in a friendly with Cyprus.

Grigorios GEORGATOS
31.10.72. Olympiakos. 15 caps (1 gl).
Arguably the team's most improved player. Has experience at full-back but midfield is his best position and he has been an automatic selection over the past 18 months. Curled home a great winner in the Finland game at the Cyprus tournament.

Stylianos GIANNAKOPOULOS
12.07.74. Olympiakos. 6 caps (1 gl).
A diligent and tactically-aware player, noted for his defensive capabilities. Not a certain starter, but making a strong case for regular inclusion.

Kostas KONSTANTINIDIS
31.08.72. Panathinaikos. 18 caps (1 gl).
Normally a substitute under Iordanescu, retaining a squad place thanks to his great versatility. He favours a midfield berth, but has played in most positions for Xanthi, OFI Crete and now Panathinaikos.

Nikos LIBEROPOULOS
04.08.75. Panathinaikos. 5 caps (1 gl).
Former Under-21 linchpin and the great hope of Greek football. At his most dangerous when given licence to roam just behind the central strikers, he has the quick feet, creativity and scoring ability to trouble any defence. Previously with the Kalamata club.

Dimitris MARKOS
31.07.71. AEK Athens. 17 caps (2 gls).
A big favourite of Iordanescu. Hard-working, with good distribution, he started his soccer life as an attacker with Second Division Naussa, and is able to play at full-back, too. Moved on to Panathinaikos and Kalamata before joining AEK last summer.

Ilias POURSANIDIS
13.04.72. Olympiakos. 14 caps.
Has a strong work ethic and is a good man-to-man marker, though is sometimes shuffled off to play at full-back. Began his career at OFI Crete and made his international debut in January 1995, against Cyprus.

Vassilis TSARTAS
12.11.72. Sevilla (Spa). 24 caps (3 gls).
Brilliant left-footed playmaker who was rated Greece's most naturally-gifted footballer during his heyday at AEK Athens in the mid-1990s. But a move to Sevilla in summer 1996 brought him down to earth with a bump. The club were relegated in his first season there and, undermined by inconsistency, he went into the international wilderness. Forced his way back into the national reckoning last autumn.

Diligent...Stylianos Giannakopoulos

Theodoros ZAGORAKIS
17.10.71. Leicester City (Eng). 38 caps.
Skipper and an intelligent and driving presence on the right of midfield. Much in evidence as PAOK Salonika knocked Arsenal out of the UEFA Cup last season. Signed by Leicester early in 1998. An international debutant in September 1994, against the Faroes, but has yet to register a goal.

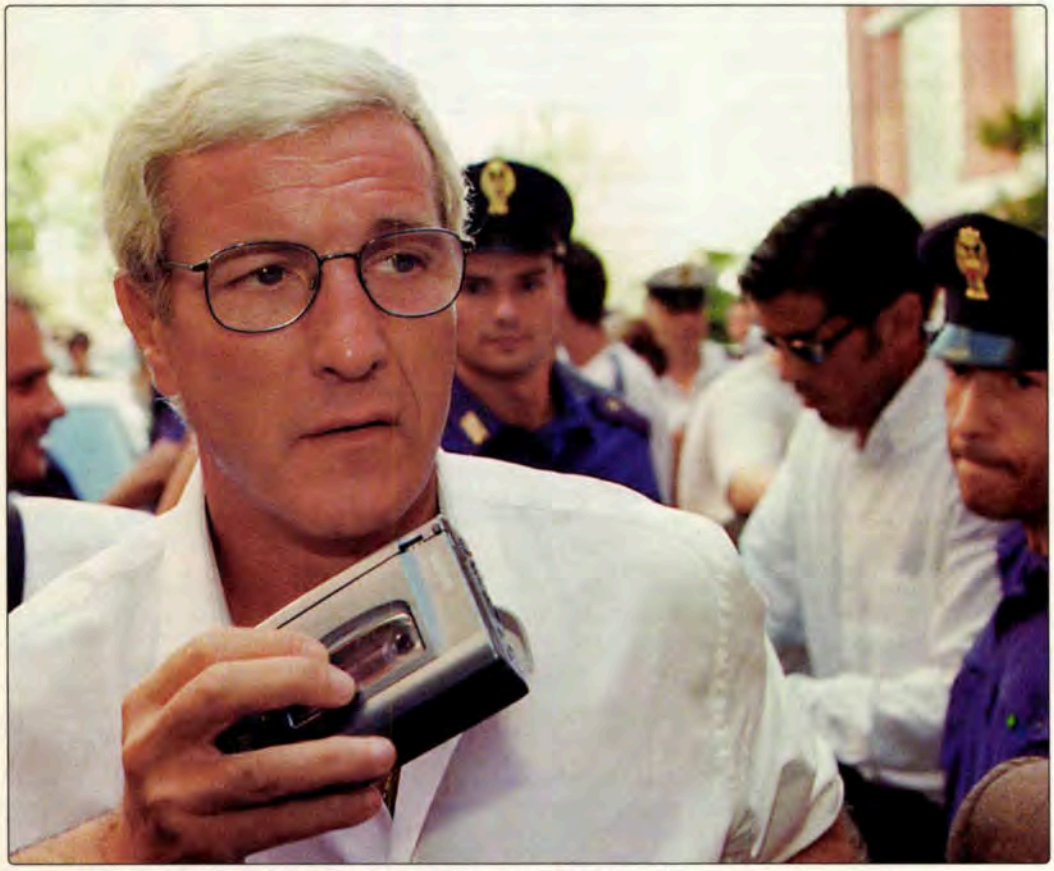
FORWARDS

Nikos MAHLAS
16.06.73. Vitesse Arnhem (Hol).
41 caps (13 gls).
Thanks to the 34 goals he poached last season for Vitesse, he became the first Greek to win Europe's annual top marksman prize, the Golden Shoe, and is among the Dutch League's foremost finishers again this term. Celebrated his first full cap, in March 1993, with a goal against Austria, and netted the winner against Russia in his fourth game, a result that secured Greece first place in their USA 94 qualifying group. Joined Vitesse from OFI Crete at the start of the 96-97 season.

Themistoklis 'Demis' NIKOLAIDIS
17.09.73. AEK Athens. 24 caps (9 gls).
Expected to migrate west in the not-too-distant future. He is the perfect foil for Mahlas: pacy, skilful, dangerous when running at defences from deep, and an assured finisher; lack of consistency is his problem. Won his first cap against Russia in April 1995 and starred for Third Division Ethnikos Alexandropoulis and Apollon before linking up with AEK in summer 1996.

Lippi leads the exit

The coaches' departure lounge has been busy, says Paddy Agnew



Out of the door...Marcello Lippi quit Juventus in anger, convinced he had lost the confidence of his players

BEWARE the Ides of March...or so we used to say in Roman times. Traditionally, March is the month when teams lose their nerve, when European cup and League title aspirants fall by the wayside and when, consequently, managers get the old heave-ho.

This year, it all seems to have happened a month earlier, with not only the title race beginning to assume clear outlines in February but also with three coaches – Marcello Lippi of Juventus, David Platt of Sampdoria and Ilario Castagner of Perugia – all resigning just before they were sacked.

Undoubtedly, the month's most dramatic moment came at Stadio Delle Alpi, when an angry Lippi stormed into the press room a few minutes after Parma had humiliated the champions 4-2 in their first-ever win against Juventus in Turin, and announced: "I have decided to resign. If I am the problem, if the problem is linked to my December announcement about my future, then I'll say good day to you and leave."

Lippi's resignation has to be set against a thus far disappointing Juventus season. The defeat by Parma came at the end of a miserable three-month, 13-match Serie A run in which the champions won only two games (against Salernitana and Perugia), lost six (Roma, Bologna, Lazio, Fiorentina, Cagliari and Parma) and drew the other five.

That wretched sequence not only put Juventus out of the title contest, but it also put Lippi under huge pressure. This came to a head on the eve of the Parma game, when he told French World Cup-winning captain Didier Deschamps that he would not be playing. The Frenchman reacted angrily and there ensued an animated 'exchange of opinions' between the two men.

That pre-match argument may well have been the moment when Lippi acknowledged that, after four glorious seasons, his time at Juventus was up. The heated exchange may well have prompted Lippi to conclude that, for the first time since he joined the club in 1994, he had lost command of his squad.

Certainly, the lacklustre Juventus performance in the game against Parma convinced Lippi that his squad no longer believed in him and his ideas. That said, many had expected that Juventus would reject his seemingly 'heat of the moment' resignation.

Not so. The inner circle at the Old Lady seemed only too ready to offload the man whose intelligent stewardship had put Juventus back at the very top of world club soccer, winning three Italian titles and one Champions Cup in four dramatic seasons.

Clearly, the Juventus officers on the bridge (Roberto Bettega, Umberto Agnelli etc) had decided that Lippi was indeed 'the problem', that his announcement in December of his intention to leave the club at the end of this season had undermined the side's concentration and commitment. In as quick time as it takes to say 'Fiat motor cars', Lippi was out and replaced by Carlo Ancelotti, the man who already had been announced as his successor next July.

Ancelotti, the former Parma coach and ex-Milan and Roma midfielder, is too experienced a professional to believe that Lippi is the beginning and end of all the Turin club's problems. However, a bright start, with successive wins against the admittedly humble opposition of Piacenza and Vicenza, did at least stifle the initial fan criticism that had greeted the new man's appointment. The rest of the season and, in particular, the Champions League run will tell us more about the nature of current Juventus ills.

If Lippi's resignation was a shock, coming as it did at a club where coaches always had seen out their contracts to the end of the season, the same can hardly be said about the departure of David Platt from his role of 'technical supervisor' with Sampdoria. Platt, 32, lasted only seven weeks in his role as de facto Sampdoria coach, picking up just three points – all from draws – from his six matches in charge.

The poor results, tensions with 'star' players such as Argentina's Ariel Ortega, and the farcical situation created by his lack of the necessary Italian qualification to serve as coach all combined to make Platt's departure from Italian soccer as meteoric as his arrival, just before Christmas.

Platt's ineligibility to serve as official coach not only prompted objections from within the Italian coaching fraternity, but also led to a situation where he found himself communicating with his assistant trainer, Giorgio Veneri (who sat on the bench for him), via mobile phone.

This latter point is not quite as trivial as it sounds. During the 1-1 home draw with Udinese, for instance, Sampdoria took all of seven minutes to bring on Marcello Castellini as cover for the sent-off Yugoslav defender Nenad Sakic. It was during those seven minutes that Sampdoria went close to conceding a winning goal to Udinese.

Platt's enthusiasm and energy failed to work wonders. In particular, club officials and the ruling Mantovani family began to feel that they had made a mistake when they saw their new coach seemingly determined to sacrifice Ortega in the interests of playing a more defensive four-man midfield behind strikers Francesco Palmieri and Vincenzo Montella, finally back from injury.

Given the departure last summer of such players as Argentinian Juan Veron and Frenchman Alain Boghossian (both to Parma), and Yugoslav sweeper Sinisa Mihajlovic (Lazio), this year's Sampdoria could ill afford to discard their most skilful player.

As with Lippi, so with Platt. Samp were quick to accept his resignation, underlining their relief by appointing as his successor Luciano Spalletti – who had been sacked to make way for him after a 5-2 defeat by Lazio in mid-December.

If Platt's dismissal had seemed well

within the bounds of comprehensibility, the same could hardly be said of the sacking of Castagner, following his side's 3-0 defeat at Lazio. Suffice to say that Perugia owner Luciano Gaucci tends to have a short fuse when it comes to coaches, having once sworn that he would sack one (Giovanni Galeone) even if the side won their next game 15-0.

To most neutral observers, Castagner seemed to be doing well with a newly-promoted side, having steered them clear of the relegation zone for most of the season. Gaucci, however, was less impressed, believing his side can do even better. Accordingly, he dropped Castagner, opting to bring in Vujadin Boskov, a coach whose experience and track record speak for themselves, but who is no longer in the first flush of youth: he is 67.

Despite an initial 2-1 win against Inter, Boskov will have his work cut out realising his owner's perhaps over-ambitious expectations.

As for the title race, it would seem that four runners are in there with a chance as the field rounds the home turn – Lazio, Parma, Fiorentina and Milan. More of that, however, next month...

At the helm...Carlo Ancelotti

Pro-file Edmundo

Fiorentina's party Animal is still the king of controversy

EDMUNDO, as his colleagues and coaches at Fiorentina have discovered, is not the easiest of team-mates. During games, when angered, the 30-year-old Brazilian thinks nothing of hurling the most offensive of insults at Gabriel Batistuta, virtually a god in Florence; in training, he has come to blows with Portuguese playmaker Rui Costa.

Until recently, the Fiorentina fans would not have had Edmundo any other way. In the first half of the season he made all the difference between the team who finished fifth in Serie A last term and the one who led the table for much of the autumn and had raised serious hopes of bringing home the scudetto for the third time in the club's history.

However, events since the New Year have raised the fearful prospect that if Fiorentina do *not* win the title then Edmundo will carry all the blame.

Early in February he flew home to Rio de Janeiro. Edmundo claimed the trip was essential to resolve legal matters following a court case which stemmed from a fatal car accident; fans and team-mates noted bitterly that his trip happened to coincide with the Rio carnival. In his absence, Fiorentina began to wobble.

Edmundo's farewell had not been a happy one. Batistuta had shouted to coach Giovanni Trapattoni to substitute the Brazilian during the frustrating 0-0 draw with Milan; Edmundo followed up with a salvo of his own: "No one's asked me to stay and, if they had, I would have left just the same. Trapattoni would do well to send me home. That way, I'm in the sun, on the beach, in the heat."

Fiorentina's problems worsened when Batistuta was ruled out for six weeks after injuring a knee late in the Milan game. Lazio edged past Fiorentina at the top of the table, and suddenly Edmundo's absence was no odd quirk, but more of an unprofessional insult to the club and their fans.

Morale was lifted when, in the absence of their South American strikeforce, the *Viola* seized a 2-0 win in Bologna in the first leg of the Italian Cup semi-final.

At least, by then, Edmundo had flown back to Italy. Indeed, while his team-mates were beating Bologna, the Brazilian was tucked up at home, recovering from jet-lag. Outside his luxury apartment lay a placard delivered by his erstwhile and now irritated fans: "That's enough: time to shut up and start winning."

But expecting Edmundo to conform is a waste of time and mental effort. "He's unusual, a very special case," says Batistuta, picking his words with great care. Brazil's World Cup coach Mario Zagallo does not waste time on diplomacy, saying: "Edmundo's a wonderful player, but he needs to see an analyst."

Fiorentina president Vittorio Cecchi Gori found one last summer: Trapattoni. Trap's trademark is to stick two fingers in his mouth and whistle to attract his players' attention. Even Edmundo pays attention to the whistle. But then, what else would you expect from a player nicknamed The Animal?

It was Palmeiras fans who gave Edmundo the name. They would howl: "Ow, ow, ow, Edmundo is an animal!" and the label stuck. So did his temper. He fought with team-mates and opponents. He quarrelled with coaches, once picked a fight with a notorious drug pusher on a beach and, on another occasion, kicked a cameraman during a club game in Ecuador – sparking a riot and earning a short spell in jail.

Florence's art treasures and the beauties of the Tuscan countryside are lost on Edmundo. He is the John McEnroe of football. A player who needs goading to sharpen his temper and play at his best.

To Cecchi Gori, Edmundo is a talisman. Fiorentina won the championship for the first time in 1956 under the magic spell of Brazilian right-winger Julinho; they won it for a second time in 1969 at the urgent attacking behest of another Brazilian, Amarildo. Hence, for the superstitious, only with a Brazilian can they hope to win the title again. Hence, also, the panic sown among Fiorentina fans when it emerged that Edmundo was homesick. He walked out on the club midway through last season after being dropped to the bench for a game against Milan. Later, he returned, shame-faced, after Zagallo said he would refuse to consider him for France 98 if he were not playing first-team football.

Towards the end of the season, Edmundo's dribbling skills made all the difference to Fiorentina. Trapattoni says: "I watched videos of all the team's matches at the end of last season and it was thanks to Edmundo they got up the table and into the UEFA Cup."

Zagallo did take Edmundo to France 98, where he earned a place in the competition's legend, though for all the wrong reasons. Edmundo, of course, thought he should have started as Ronaldo's striking partner instead of Bebeto. Yet though he was given a brief run-out as a sub against Morocco in Brazil's second game, his over-eagerness to do well produced an abysmal 18 minutes.

Point proved, Zagallo left Edmundo on the bench for the rest of the tournament – up until the Final. It's now history how Edmundo found himself on the team list instead of Ronaldo and was then dropped, all before kick-off. And how he did appear, for the last 16 minutes, when the cause was already lost.

His angry comments afterwards reportedly drew a promise from CBF president Ricardo Teixeira that "Edmundo will never play for Brazil again". So, the only glory games now are with Fiorentina – at least until the end of term, when Edmundo will run home for good, to Vasco da Gama.

Keir Radnedge

Fact file

Club Fiorentina (Ita)
Country Brazil
Born April 2, 1971, in Rio de Janeiro
Previous clubs Vasco da Gama, Palmeiras, Flamengo, Corinthians, Vasco da Gama
International caps 29 (9 goals)
Honours Rio championship 1992 (Vasco); Sao Paulo championship 1994 (Palmeiras); Brazilian championship 1994 (Palmeiras), 1997 (Vasco); Copa America 1997

On the point of departure...Guus Hiddink

No laughing matter

Guus cooked and Sacchi sacked. Graham Turner reports

A SPANISH saying has it that laughter goes round a city district by district. Weeping, too. In December, it was all sweat, tears and baying for blood in the back streets of Barcelona, while Madrid was indulging in a fit of the giggles.

In a matter of weeks, the laughing gas had drifted towards Catalonia and the good citizens of Madrid were spending a fortune on Kleenex. While Barcelona and Espanyol were relishing record-breaking unbeaten runs, Atletico and Real were scouring the market for managerial replacements following the departures of Arrigo Sacchi and Guus Hiddink.

Although other results undoubtedly contributed, the double confrontation between Castillians and Catalans in mid-February proved to be decisive. Firstly, Espanyol went to Madrid and beat Atletico 2-1 before a disgruntled crowd in the Vicente Calderon stadium. A day later, Barcelona demolished Real at Camp Nou by a scoreline which was 3-0 going on 8-2.

For Atletico, another home defeat could hardly have come at a worse moment. Given his struggle against the long arm of the law, club president Jesus Gil needed popular support more than ever. Remember that when he was in jail, he offered the fans free tickets on condition that they signed a document professing their support for him, and then used the match as a massive pro-Gil demonstration. When the fans turned against Atletico during the Espanyol game, nobody had to be an Einstein to make the equation add up to dismissal for Arrigo Sacchi.

But, in purely footballing terms, giving Sacchi the sacchi didn't add up. A coach of his calibre is hired for long-term projects rather than Sunday-by-Sunday torture. He was hardly given a fair crack of the whip. Christian Vieri said *arrivederci* Madrid, left Sacchi in the lurch and shot off to Rome just before the season started.

Fellow striker Kiko, after flapping around for months with a pair of loosely-hinged ankles, finally went under the scalpel in February and, after a four-hour operation, now focuses on being able to recover in time for next season. Vladimir Jugovic has also been injury-bugged, while Juninho, still unable to recover his pre-injury form, was rarely sharp enough to be in the starting line-up.

But, in football, bad luck is no excuse. Ninth place is ninth place, whichever spin you put on it. Sacchi duly became the 22nd big-name coach to be sacked by Gil during his 12-year mandate. Second-team coach Carlos Aguiar stepped into the breach and promptly slotted Juninho back into the starting line-up. The little Brazilian then helped Atletico to wreak revenge by beating Espanyol in the Copa del Rey.

Even that was slightly embarrassing for Atletico, as former Argentina coach Daniel Passarella had flown into town. The Argentinian hurriedly explained that he was in Madrid for personal reasons, while club officials dropped heavy hints about Aguiar carrying on. They stopped abruptly when Atletico were beaten 3-2 by Real Sociedad in their next League game. That left them 11th.

Across the city at Real, life looked equally bleak, and even Hiddink supporters were accepting that Guus was cooked. He had been the victim of the curious modern phenomenon whereby the fans, maybe spoiled by wholesale quantities of televised top-level football or by a team that mopped up the European and intercontinental titles in 1998, demand not only results but also spectacular football for 90 minutes of every game. Real Madrid suddenly stopped providing it.

As with many major clubs, their top stars were short of form. Fernando Hierro, Pedja Mijatovic and Fernando Redondo were notable absences through injury. What's more, the players started having tiffs where everybody could see them – on the pitch. There were soon mutters about egos too big to squeeze into the dressing-room and about Hiddink's inability to impose a pecking order.

Guus, maybe hampered by his docile wouldn't-say-boo-to-a-guus public image, remained outwardly calm. He was then slated for fiddling with the team's shape and for his 'lack of tactical substitutions'.

Little by little, the media built up the pressure, and the first turning point came in the home game against lowly Valladolid. Real, despite a 2-0 lead, were not producing the 24-carat football to dangle before the donkey. When two defensive errors – including one by the president's son, Fernando Sanz – allowed the visitors to draw level, the fans started to protest and, significantly, continued to jeer the team despite the 92nd-minute winner which gave Raul his first League hat-trick and allowed Real to pocket three points.

It was at this point that the 'they'll never win the Champions League playing like this' comments started – something guaranteed to raise presidential hackles.

Next: the trip to Barcelona. Although the meetings between the so-called G-14 group of top European clubs have served to lower the barriers between Real and Barça at board level, Sanz refused to set foot in Camp Nou. The players might as well have stayed away, too, so calamitous was their display.

Even before Roberto Carlos suffered a cerebral short-circuit and got himself sent off for a two-footed aerial bombardment in the 20th minute, Louis Van Gaal's side had made it clear they were going to take the Whites to the cleaners. Real had no response to the exhilarating form of Luis Figo and Luis Enrique, and, as Van Gaal remarked afterwards, playing against 10 men probably blunted some of Barça's cutting edge. For Real, 3-0 was a lenient punishment.

It was also a classic case of the manner of defeat mattering more than the defeat itself. People started asking questions about what Steve McManaman, signed from Liverpool for next season, can do for a side which has enough attacking flair but has severe vitamin deficiencies in other departments.

This was acutely illustrated three days later when Real visited Racing Santander in the Copa del Rey quarter-final first leg and won 6-2. Normally, a result like that would juxtapose the proverbial oil and troubled waters. But nothing of the sort. The critics focused on the two goals conceded and launched more broadsides at Hiddink's fragile rearguard.

Three days after the half-dozen in Santander came a home League confrontation with Athletic Bilbao, and the Basques pushed him even nearer the exit. Real produced another uninspired performance and were beaten by a splendid goal from former Atletico striker Santi Ezquerro.

That left the Meringues in sixth place with the worst defensive record in the League – 36 goals conceded in 23 games – and nobody had conceded more at home.

At that point – and purely by coincidence, of course – Fabio Capello happened to arrive at Barajas airport, on his way to give a lecture to the Spanish coaches' association. His name had been cropping up all over the place as the anti-Hiddink murmurs gained in volume, and it was noted that Real, under his guidance in the 1996-97 season, had conceded 36 goals in 42 games. In fact, his record was 27-11-4, which compared favourably with the eight defeats suffered by Hiddink's side in 23 games.

Capello had left Real – answering Silvio Berlusconi's call to rejoin Milan – after leading them to the League title but completing only one of the three seasons written into his contract. Although Lorenzo Sanz has gone through seven coaches during his four seasons in the presidential chair at Real, Capello was the only one to have walked out – a fact that provoked an indignant reaction from Sanz. But, as soon as he emerged from the

terminal at Barajas, Capello admitted: "I made a big mistake in leaving Madrid and it's great to hear the fans talking about me coming back."

Sanz had, in the meantime, called an emergency board meeting for the following evening after the second leg of the Cup quarter-final against Santander. The axe finally fell on Hiddink despite a 1-0 victory which gave Madrid a 7-2 aggregate win.

Unfortunately for Capello, Sanz then sprung a major surprise by announcing the appointment of John Toshack as Hiddink's successor. Tosh returns for a second spell at the Bernabeu after Real agreed to pay Turkish club Besiktas £325,000 in compensation.

All the mayhem in Madrid had allowed Barcelona to consolidate their position at the top of the table. However, their run of 10 straight wins was brought to an end after an enthralling evening of football at Camp Nou. Valencia emerged as 3-2 victors in the first leg of their Copa del Rey quarter-final, with Mendieta scoring the winner courtesy of a stunning volley from the edge of the box.

The fact that the laughter had returned to Barcelona was underlined by the crowd's reaction. A few weeks ago, the fans were whistling, jeering and hauling out the white handkerchiefs for the traditional snotty reaction to poor football. After the defeat by Valencia, they gave the team a standing ovation.

Van Gaal's team are now favourites to win a second consecutive League title. But the gaps at the top remain slim and their following League match, against Celta in Vigo which ended in a satisfactory 0-0 draw, provided a salutary reminder that some of the outsiders are playing some good football. Victor Fernandez's side gave Barça the run-around for long periods of the game and only some goalkeeping heroics by Ruud Hesp prevented the scoreboard-operator from breaking his duck.

In the meantime, Hector Cuper's Mallorca were emerging from a poor patch by winning 3-1 in Oviedo to take second place, with the former Real Madrid striker Dani hitting two to bring his tally for the season to seven. That might seem a tawdry total – especially as it includes one penalty – but the interest from English clubs is justified by the fact that Mallorca had managed only 22 goals in 22 previous games.

But the prize for sheer miserliness must go to Extremadura. An 86th-minute goal by Dure gave them a surprise 2-1 home victory over Javier Clemente's Betis and had the fans rubbing their eyes in disbelief. It was the first time that Extremadura had scored more than one goal all season.

On that weekend, four of the bottom five won, leaving Tenerife, 3-1 losers to Alaves in Vitoria, at the bottom of the table. Carlos Aimar has taken over a talented squad, capable of playing attractive football but poorly equipped for scrapping in the muck-and-bullets trench warfare in and around the relegation zone. Three wins in 23 games hardly augur well for the future of the Canary Islands in the top bracket, unless Las Palmas can maintain their status at the head of the Second Division.

Finally, a word of praise for Miguel Angel Brindisi, who has worked wonders since taking over at ailing Espanyol. The side have climbed out of the relegation zone and, although the Budgies should have won more games, they have become solid enough to build a 10-match unbeaten run. Results apart, the more significant fact is that Brindisi has been fielding youngsters who have come through the club's youth scheme.

His bravery is not only producing good footballing dividends, it is also good city politics. Espanyol are acutely aware that Barcelona's trend towards the massive recruitment of foreigners in general and Dutchmen in particular has opened a niche in the Catalan market. Barcelona have always been regarded as the Catalans' standard-bearers, but the lack of local products on show has provoked general malaise and Brindisi has shrewdly played his local cards at the right time, winning public support for the city's 'kid brother'.

France

Giant strides

Andre Duclos reports on the world champions' progress

TEAMS can grow with success. That surely was what we saw at Wembley when France, accused of having won the World Cup Final *faute de mieux*, played England off the park and thus became the first France side to win on English soil.

Yet this might have happened in the May 1945 game, at Wembley, too, when nobody gave the French much of a chance. After all, the war was barely over and England's team, with the likes of Cullis, Mercer, Lawton and Matthews, surely would make mincemeat of the French, not long released from German occupation.

But France, who included such 1938 World Cup veterans as Gusti Jordan, Oscar Heisserer and Fred Aston, had the temerity to force a 2-2 draw.

Fast forward to 1951, and once more the French gave England a shock in London, drawing 2-2 again but this time at Highbury.

What Wembley showed in 1999 was the immense strides made by Nicolas Anelka as an international striker (*see feature on page 14*). But do not forget that another, substantially older, French forward did very well at Wembley when sent on: Christophe Dugarry. So the palpable deficiency of central striking power in our 1998 World Cup team seems to have been made good.

Laurent Blanc goes smoothly and strongly on. Just as Aime Jacquet managed to persuade him to go on playing for France after the horrid anti-climax of elimination by Bulgaria in late 1993, so Roger Lemerre succeeded in making Blanc change his mind about carrying on after the last World Cup.

Blanc puts no deadline on his club career, which proceeds powerfully with Marseille, and attributes his success and longevity to the difficult early days he had with lesser clubs.

Emmanuel Petit says much the same about his early endeavours: "I've attained a serenity I'd never have had if I hadn't lived through all that." But he emphasises that "if you want international recognition, you have to leave Monaco", his former club.

For that reason he sympathised with the attitudes of Thierry Henry, who recently left Monaco for Juventus, and David Trezeguet, who is still there, citing the cases of George Weah, Youri Djorkaeff and Lilian Thuram. Although he insists he says this "without spitting on the club, which has achieved a European dimension to which I'm proud of having contributed".

He recalls that when, early in his Arsenal career, he was up before an FA disciplinary tribunal, Arsene Wenger told him afterwards that he had not had the honours he deserved: "You ought to have as many caps as Didier Deschamps, to be captain of the international team. Take the example of Thuram; he is less talented than you, but he has never given up, not in training, not in a game."

Petit plainly has taken the lesson and its moral to heart.

First for France...*Les Bleus* finally beat England in England

Germany

Bayern look unstoppable

BAYERN Munich appear home and dry in the League already – and the season has only just resumed after the winter break. In a poll, 91 per cent of players and 15 of the 18 bosses in the German top division forecast Munich mastery.

MSV Duisburg never looked likely to upset the odds as they succumbed 3-0 at home to the Champions League quarter-finalists. Carsten Jancker and Stefan Effenberg scored in the first half, veteran defender Thomas Helmer midway through the second.

Bayern owe a great deal to their successful summer transfer gamble on midfield general Effenberg, who insists that all his controversies – squabbles with coaches and team-mates, national team suspensions, rude gestures to fans – are all in the past.

Effenberg says: "I know a lot of people thought Bayern made a mistake signing me, but I'm 30 now, it was time to grow up. I can even say that if the coach [Ottmar Hitzfeld] thought it was right to leave me on the bench then I would accept his decision because I recognise his experience, his responsibility and his authority. No one has ever heard me say anything like that before!"

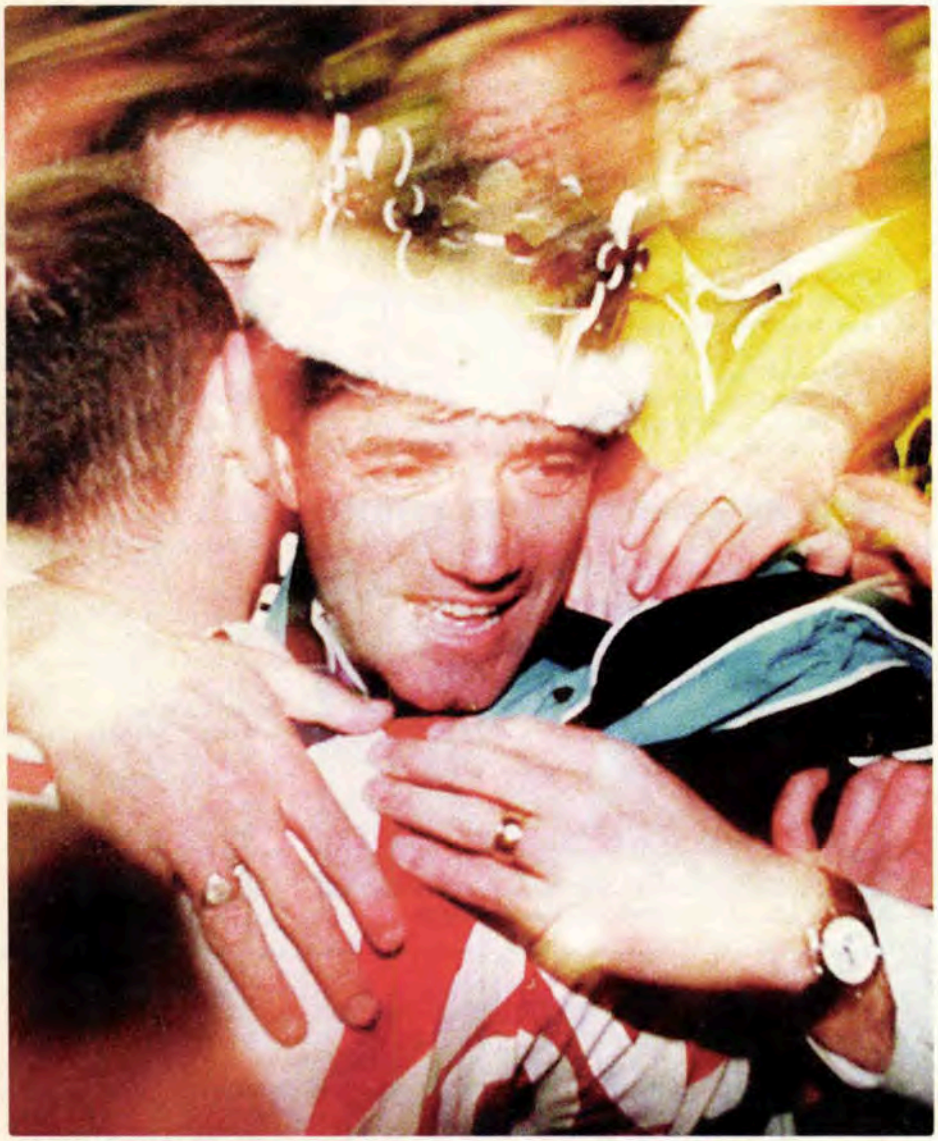
Bayern's victory took them 10 points clear of Bayer Leverkusen, who were held 1-1 at home by Freiburg.

Despite German fans' anger at the national team's 3-0 defeat by the USA, it has not affected their passion for the League. The average attendance on the first weekend after the break was more than 30,000, the highest being the 68,419 who saw Hertha defeat Borussia Dortmund 3-0 in the old Olympic stadium.

Keir Radnedge

Keegan's bluff

The Fulham boss takes the England job for four matches – but he could be persuaded to stay



King Kev...Keegan's charisma made him the FA's clear favourite for the (part-time) England job

GOODBYE Glenn, hello Howard, come on board Kevin. In the space of a month England have had three national managers. By the summer, there will possibly be a fourth in office.

Kevin Keegan insists he will only be in charge for the next four matches. He remains committed to his lucrative contract at Second Division Fulham and he will continue to manage them alongside his new, temporary, commitment to England.

Keegan was the first choice of the Football Association's acting chief executive David Davies to succeed Howard Wilkinson, who had stepped into the breach after the FA sacked Glenn Hoddle.

The FA were keen to appoint Keegan on a full-time contract but now face the embarrassing prospect of searching for a new coach in June. The list of candidates will again be short and very unlikely to include Terry Venables, the players' choice, who remains out of favour with the FA's international committee.

By then, of course, Keegan may well have decided that he wants the job on a full-time basis. A lot will depend on the results of the Euro 2000 qualifiers against Poland, Sweden and Bulgaria.

There is no doubt that Keegan's powers of motivation will lift players who were outplayed at Wembley by a stylish France team in Wilkinson's only game in charge. Keegan turned around Newcastle's fortunes in dramatic style, and his boundless energy seems to be rubbing off at Fulham. But whether Keegan's gung-ho tactical approach, as witnessed by his 'you-score-five-we'll-score-six' attitude at Newcastle, will work at international level remains highly debatable.

Hoddle's sacking by the Football Association was swift and rather brutal. It followed the failure of Hoddle to gauge the strength of public outrage generated by his comments on disabled people and reincarnation to Matt Dickinson of *The Times*.

Hoddle had been under increasing pressure to quit following the publication of his controversial World Cup diary, in which he betrayed the confidences of leading players and revealed the extent of his reliance on faith healer Eileen Drewery.

Hoddle's views on reincarnation were nothing new – he had expressed them to Radio Five Live before the World Cup – but his failure to apologise publicly following *The Times* interview proved fatal. His determination to defend his views, just as he had refused to sever his ties with Drewery, only reinforced the public view of Hoddle as a crank.

Nevertheless, he is entitled to feel aggrieved at his treatment. He is the first (and no doubt last) England coach whose fate was sealed on *This Morning*, better known as the Richard and Judy show, a daytime TV programme watched by housewives and the unemployed. Prime Minister Tony Blair, whose spin doctors were in contact with the FA, announced to Richard and Judy that Hoddle should resign – and a day later England were looking for a new coach.

The FA's decisiveness in dismissing Hoddle and appointing Keegan was no coincidence. The acting leadership – Davies and chairman Geoff Thompson – are keen to promote themselves as the dynamic new face of English football. Witness also their eagerness to declare their support for Arsenal's offer to replay their FA Cup fifth-round tie with Sheffield United.

Arsenal's 'winning' goal looked set to put ungentlemanly conduct alongside their appalling disciplinary record. With the score at 1-1 late in the game at Highbury, the ball was kicked into touch by United keeper Alan Kelly to allow treatment to an injured team-mate. However, when play resumed, Arsenal new boy Nwankwo Kanu intercepted a throw back to the United defence and crossed for Marc Overmars to score.

Naturally, merry hell broke loose, even though Arsenal had broken no rules, merely sporting convention. After the match Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger acknowledged Kanu's mistake and offered to replay the tie. With delicious irony, Overmars scored in the replay, which Arsenal again won 2-1.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer strengthened his 'supersub' reputation with four second-half goals in Manchester United's 8-1 demolition of bottom club Nottingham Forest, the biggest away win in the Premier League's short history.

The arrival of Ron Atkinson as manager has failed to improve Forest's dismal situation. They look doomed to go down, while Charlton moved out of the bottom three following wins over Wimbledon, Liverpool and Derby.

Leicester will contest the League Cup Final with Spurs, who are on course for a cup double after a thrilling 2-0 win over Leeds took them into the last eight of the FA Cup. Also through are Arsenal, Manchester United, Chelsea, Derby, Barnsley, Newcastle and Everton.

Gavin Hamilton

SCOTLAND

Goram gesture causes a storm

THE TENUOUS and often incomprehensible links that have always existed between Scottish football and Irish politics resurfaced when Motherwell keeper Andy Goram, desperately trying to rescue a career which has been on the slide since his release from Rangers last summer, was pictured holding a banner depicting the outlawed Ulster Volunteer Force.

Motherwell manager Billy Davies and chief executive Pat Nevin found themselves caught up in an almighty political row when they tried to find a solution to the problems the photograph had created.

In the end, Davies and Nevin provided Goram with their backing while the player intimated that he would be taking legal proceedings against the newspaper that ran the story.

The whole unsavoury episode took a further twist when Goram advised his manager that he did not wish to be selected for the vital clash with Celtic, using his well-worn excuse of "not being mentally attuned" for the occasion.

Goram had given a similar reason when withdrawing from the Scotland squad shortly before a World Cup qualifier against Greece a few years ago.

Celtic took full advantage of Goram's absence by winning 7-1, thus continuing their challenge to Rangers.

The game featured the return of midfielder Craig Burley, out since October with a knee injury. Three hat-tricks in four games, however, ensured that the spotlight fell on Celtic's Swedish striker, Henrik Larsson.

In Dundee, meanwhile, feelings are running high after suggestions of a merger between the two clubs become stronger.

Dundee have ensured that their ground meets all the required standards for top-level participation and, at the very least, a ground-sharing exercise could provide a short-term solution, thereby eradicating the situation whereby the city has two football grounds less than 100 yards apart.

Alan Fairley

Controversy...Motherwell's Andy Goram

Goal spree...Celtic's Henrik Larsson

N IRELAND

Kirk and Kirk doing well

ANDY KIRK, a 19-year-old striker for League leaders Glentoran, looks to have achieved his ambition of a full-time soccer career with his transfer to Scottish club Hearts for around £100,000.

The youngster's impressive performances as a maker and taker of goals (eight in the League), have helped take Glens to pole position in the title race.

Despite losing the talented Kirk, manager Roy Coyle has other talented young players such as forward Rory Hamill (22), midfielders Paul Leeman (20) and Stuart Elliott (21), and defender Colin Nixon (20) as he bids for the title.

Meanwhile, Andy Kirk's father, Paul, has taken Distillery, the club he manages, past Ards at the top of the First Division.

Roy Kitson

WALES

Barry Rain-ed off

A LONE GOAL by Stuart Rain was enough for Connah's Quay Nomads to beat champions Barry on their own Jenner Park and progress to the last eight of the Welsh Cup.

Four other top-division sides, Carmarthen Town, Conwy United, TNS, and Cwmbran Town, won through easily, but Inter CableTel were held to a 1-1 draw by Second Division Pontardawe Town before winning the replay.

The quarter-final draw was completed by Ammanford AFC from the Third Division and Second Division title-chasers Port Talbot Athletic.

Inter CableTel are rapidly becoming the only real challengers to Barry as the champions race towards their fourth consecutive title. Inter, on a 10-match unbeaten run, are pulling away from the other chasers, who continue to drop points.

Barry are still the only full-time pro outfit in the League and their six-figure sponsorship deal with soft-drink label Tango will enable them to carry on gaining financially lucrative European games.

Mel Thomas

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A flop on the farm

The Manchester Utd-Antwerp deal is a non-starter, says Michael Butcher

BELGIUM

MANCHESTER UNITED, riding high in almost every activity, have come a cropper at farming. In November last year United heralded a new deal with Royal Antwerp. Given Belgium's relaxed attitude to immigration, Antwerp was to be the farm club that funnelled new talent from around the world through to United. In return, the Belgians would benefit from the loan of reserves – Jamie Wood, Danny Higginbotham and Ronnie Wallwork have already joined Antwerp.

The idea was that the pact would exploit a European law that allows foreign nationals free movement within the EU once they have lived here for five years. So Antwerp would bring over teenage gems from Brazil, Africa or eastern Europe, polish them up and ship them on to Old Trafford when the time was ripe.

Exchange student...United's Danny Higginbotham in the white of Royal Antwerp

A massive scandal may have scotched that scenario. Amid scenes reminiscent of the slave trade, we learned that in the Low Countries trafficking of African teenagers as young as 14 was taking place. They were being bought for £650 or so, then sent to Belgium to be exploited by clubs who offered them little or no pay.

Whether their usefulness ran out or there were no takers the result was the same. They were dumped on the street with no money or means to get home.

The hue and cry was so great when the story emerged that parliament was forced to act. The proposed minimum age for overseas signings is now 18, and agents and clubs have been made responsible for their social and financial well-being. There is no suggestion that Antwerp were involved in wrongdoing, but the tighter regulations make it trickier to be a farm club.

There are other problems. By the end of last season, Antwerp had been relegated after an inept display of transfer madness. The club, slipping down the table, raced through nearly 30 signings in a desperate attempt to stem the decline. At one stage they had amassed seven goalkeepers alone.

There is also the little matter of a new stadium. Antwerp were meant to be one of the host clubs for Euro 2000. A new stadium with a retractable roof was the grandiose vision. In expectation, they started knocking down the old one. The local council were meant to be footing the bill, but sports department chief Gilbert Verstraelen did not see eye to eye with club president Eddy Wauters. The plans were not so much put on ice as thrown on to the council tip. Now part of the stadium is in ruins.

There is worse. In order to fund his grand plans, Wauters borrowed heavily. There is a limit to investors' patience and pay-back time is looming. If the money is not forthcoming, the club could disappear altogether.

● CLUB BRUGGE found the successor to Eric Gerets on their own doorstep having named Rene Verheyen their coach from the summer. Verheyen, assistant to both Gerets and Hugo Broos before him, was preferred to a host of candidates linked to the post ever since Gerets confirmed he would be departing for PSV.

Brugge were also in the news for a less savoury reason. No sooner had the finishing touches been put to the former Olympia stadium, now renamed Stade Jan-Breydel, than Anderlecht fans were ripping it apart. Seats were hurled on to the pitch after the controversial dismissal of former Brugge player Lorenzo Staelens.

Leaders Genk continued their pursuit of the Double when an own goal by St Truiden's Dirk Van Oekelen gave the Cup-holders a 1-0 win and a place in the semi-finals.

Nicholas Harling

HOLLAND

Fans cause more trouble

FEYENOORD hooligans have been on the warpath again. Several thousand used a friendly away to Bayer Leverkusen as a cover to cause disorder. Before the match there were fights in the city, and afterwards fans clashed with police and burned down a ticket booth.

German police had not expected so many hooligans to turn up. But these people can only riot outside Holland, because most of them have been registered and aren't allowed to visit matches in their own country.

Feyenoord chairman Jorien Van den Herink immediately declared that his club will not take any supporters to European matches for the next 18 months. "I see no other solution – our reputation is at stake," he said.

The club's qualification for such competition is almost certain. They are still leading the League and Holland will be represented by three clubs in the Champions League next season.

The gap increased after Feyenoord's 3-1 win over PSV, who had goalkeeper Ronald Waterreus sent off for the second time this season.

Ajax's hopes of qualifying for the Champions League are looking gloomy. Despite the appointment of Jan Wouters as coach, the club made a disappointing start after the winter break, losing 2-1 to Twente and drawing with Heerenveen. The departure of the De Boer twins and improving performances of Vitesse and PSV has added to the pressure.

Holland drew 0-0 with Portugal in a match played in Paris as a 'gift' to the many Portuguese immigrants who live there. It was Frank Rijkaard's third straight draw since taking over as national boss.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

Seeing red...Ronald Waterreus

REP IRELAND

Watch out for Macedonia!

NATIONAL manager Mick McCarthy and his team have not forgotten their first trip to Macedonia, in April 1997.

The Republic turned in one of their worst performances under McCarthy and the 3-2 defeat in Skopje was a crucial blow to their hopes of reaching the World Cup finals.

At every subsequent training session, the player who has performed the worst has been handed a T-shirt bearing the legend 'I had a Macedonia'.

When the Irish return to Skopje, on March 27, they will therefore be primed for revenge, and will be boosted by the fact that they won't have to wear the unpopular orange strip that had its first outing on their original visit. It has been worn only once since then, for the home game against Mexico last May, and a new black away shirt is being launched this month.

While the Republic were beating an under-strength Paraguay 2-0 in Dublin, Macedonia were losing by the same score in Albania. But McCarthy, while happy that his team got a win under their belts after the defeat in Yugoslavia in November, does not read much into the latest results. "Bitter experience has taught us that Macedonia are a big test for any team at home," he said.

The FAI are involved in a tug-of-war with English clubs over youngsters such as Robbie Keane, Damien Duff, Richard Dunne and Stephen McPhail, all of whom are named in coach Brian Kerr's squad for the World Youth Cup in Nigeria in April.

FAI chief executive Bernard O'Byrne understands clubs wanting their players at this key time of the season, but says the blame rests with FIFA for the timing of the competition. He will lead the FAI's bid to have this and other tournaments for younger players staged at the end of the regular season.

The 'find another Irishman' campaign reached a new low last month when Sunderland's Paul Butler was named in the Republic 'B' squad.

Butler, who was born in Manchester, qualifies to play for Wales through the FIFA parental rule, but opted for the Republic. He has been married to an Irish girl for more than three years and is thus entitled to an Irish passport.

Sean Creedon

Solid builder...Jaime Pacheco

PORTUGAL

Boavista, the big surprise

THE big surprise of the season so far, without a doubt, is the form of Boavista, one of the 'other' clubs from Oporto.

For a long, long time Boavista were known more for their shirt design – a type of chessboard pattern – than for their football.

Their name derives from an area of Portugal's second city, and the club have produced quite a few high-class players, not all of whom have been seduced by the attractions of neighbours Porto or Lisbon rivals Benfica and Sporting.

Boavista have tended to do better in the Cup, winning in 1975, 1976, 1979, 1992 and 1997, whereas second place in 1976 has been their best League position to date. Now, however, they have claims to be a genuine force.

They may not have the resources of the Big Three, but they are financially sound. The 23,000-capacity Bessa stadium is being rebuilt, and they have a core of solid support from the proud 'Boavisteiros', who are longing for that first championship.

Much of the credit is due to the former chairman, Valentim Loureiro, and his son Joao, who took up the position when his father was elected chairman of the city council. Coach Jaime Pacheco deserves a tribute, too.

Pacheco, who played for Sporting, Porto and Vitoria Setubal, has built his team around Romanian Ion Timofte, midfielder Jorge Couto and defender Quevedo. He now has a squad good enough to be in second place, and sometimes they look capable of doing even better. First, though, they must dethrone Porto, who are bidding for a record fifth successive championship.

Alberto Da Silva

AUSTRIA

Euro headaches piling up

THE European Championship is giving Austrian soccer chiefs a double dose of worry. Two points dropped against Israel at home may carry a heavy penalty in the qualification battle for Euro 2000, while fresh doubts have arisen over the chances of co-hosting the 2004 tournament with neighbours Hungary.

It is beginning to look as if victories in Tel Aviv and at home to Spain, over a four-day period in the autumn, may be necessary if Austria are to qualify for Euro 2000, as well as beating the minnows, Cyprus and San Marino.

As for five years' time, the Austrians have been looking with growing concern at events in Hungary's backyard, where the triangular 'discussions' – though this is hardly the word – between FA, Sports Ministry and FIFA cannot have gone unnoticed at UEFA headquarters.

There are troubles enough completing plans for sufficient stadia outside Ernst Happel in Vienna and Nep in Budapest, but with the Hungarian association in danger of international suspension and the overall sports authority in Budapest looking at alleged financial irregularity within Hungarian football's governing body, those who decide where the European Championship is to be played will not be easily convinced that two countries with relatively small populations and few big cities are the ideal choice.

Qualification for Euro 2000 would help both countries' claims that they are suitable candidates to stage the tournament four years later, and they will be well aware that it is perhaps the only chance for a long time to come of central Europe hosting a significant footballing event.

On the domestic front, only Rapid look capable of breaking the stranglehold exerted by the Graz clubs on the League over the past 18 months.

Linz and Salzburg's chances of a UEFA place seem even slimmer, but Salzburg coach Hans Krankl is going to give it another go. He is apparently taking the risk of playing former Nurnberg defender Uwe Wolf, who also had a short spell with Munich1860 but whose career seemed over when he was severely injured in a training game.

Bob Vaughan

LUXEMBOURG

Union go top

UNION LUXEMBOURG are the new league leaders after taking their unbeaten run to 12 with a 4-0 win over Petange.

F91 Dudelange moved up to second by beating previous leaders Avenir Beggen but only six points split the top six clubs.

Christian Alverdi, released by Grevenmacher, will join F91 next season.

Tim Brice

Pro-file Michael Mols

Heading back to the big city

A JOURNEY back to his roots is on the cards for Utrecht and Holland striker Michael Mols. He was born in Amsterdam and is the man Ajax want to add some much-needed punch to their attack.

A move back to the club he played for as a youngster seems sure to be rubber-stamped this coming summer, although Sheffield Wednesday have also expressed an interest. The 27-year-old might have been featuring in the Ajax line-up already but for the reaction of Utrecht fans to rumours that their idol would be leaving during the winter break.

Songs were bellowed in his honour throughout the home game with Sparta Rotterdam, banners urging him to stay were unfurled, and e-mails and faxes expressing similar sentiments arrived at the club in their hundreds.

Mols announced that he would not decide his future until the end of the season, saying: "I can't deny I haven't been touched by the actions and words of the supporters at Utrecht. It's nice to be appreciated, and it's 50-50 whether I stay or go.

"I have strong feelings for Utrecht. On the other hand, I've never hidden the fact that I'm very ambitious, and I want to compete in European club football on a regular basis."

These are diplomatic words, but in reality Mols must know that his days at Utrecht are numbered. He was released by Ajax nine years ago, and surely would love the opportunity to go back as their goalscoring saviour. After a career in the provinces with Cambuur, Twente and Utrecht, the lure of the pinnacle of Dutch football should prove irresistible.

It was while at Twente that the then national coach Guus Hiddink gave him his first cap, in a 1-0 friendly defeat by France. That proved a false dawn. Mols, out of his depth, was taken off after less than an hour, and three years would pass before another call-up came his way. International rejection also undermined his club form and he was off-loaded to Utrecht.

The change of surroundings proved the making of him. He struck up an excellent working relationship with coach Ronald Spelbos and suddenly serial goalscoring became his business. He turned out to be quick-witted, awash with skill and a deadly finisher, having put away 29 goals over the past two seasons and 10 this term.

Although picked last year for friendlies against the USA and Mexico, he was again ignored for France 98. But with Frank Rijkaard now in charge, it seems that Mols will be offered every chance of making the international grade. He has featured in every Dutch squad this season, appearing as a substitute against both Germany and Portugal.

"I've been very impressed with Michael," says Rijkaard. "He's almost ready to step up."

Just one more push.

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club FC Utrecht
Country Holland
Born December 17, 1970, in Amsterdam
Previous clubs Geuzenveld, Eendracht '82, Blau-Wit, Ajax, Cambuur Leeuwarden, FC Twente
International debut February 1995, v France
International caps 5 (0 goals)

Jackpot!

Odd deal keeps Sergen in the money

TURKEY

SERGEN YALCIN is perhaps better known for his off-field exploits than his on-field successes. In the past few years, Turkish football has been full of stories about Sergen's interests – gambling, night-clubbing, racing (he owns horses) and some football. And transfers.

He is a midfielder of great talent, but does not produce it as often as we might like. Even so, when he left Besiktas for Istanbulspor in the summer of 1997, he cost his new club a Turkish record fee of just under £6million, plus £1m as a signing-on 'welcome' and match fees of £13,000 a time.

Istanbulspor did not get much in return. They were fourth in the League last season, and were knocked out of the Turkish Cup in the quarter-finals. Sergen picked up two more caps, taking his total to 32, but sometimes looked to have too much weight and too little interest.

Happy motoring...Sergen Yalcin

Things did not improve this season, and eventually the club decided to let him go, asking a 'bargain' £3m. No takers. For nearly a month, not a single sign of interest – until Jet-Pa arrived on the scene. Jet-Pa is a company with various interests, including Proton cars, and to Istanbulspor's relief, a deal was done. Jet-Pa bought the 27-year-old player's contract and arranged for him to play for Fenerbahce, wearing a shirt with the car's name on it. Every time he turns out in this kit, he gets a little over £30,000.

Sergen has promised to be a good boy and help Fenerbahce to regain the championship from Galatasaray. He certainly started well, scoring after only 20 seconds when he went on as a substitute in a 6-0 win over Adanaspor.

After the 21st round of games, when none of the top four won, Fenerbahce led by one point. Samsunspor held them to a 1-1 draw and so ended their run of nine successive wins. More importantly, Fener's Metin Diyadin broke a leg and will be out for the rest of the season, while Murat Yakin was sent off and automatically misses one match.

Besiktas manager John Toshack upset Galatasaray by claiming that they were too often favoured by referees, particularly when playing at home. Then a journalist upset Toshack by printing an untrue story that Besiktas had sacked him. Apparently the reporter misunderstood what 'Tosh' was saying while waiting for a plane to Britain; in fact, he was flying out at short notice because his father was ill.

Hasan Cemali

GREECE

Fans win double Euro bonus

MORE THAN 5,000 Olympiakos fans were expected to travel to Italy for the Champions League quarter-final first leg against Juventus on March 3.

Juventus officials originally promised Olympiakos only 2,600 tickets, but because of the great demand – this is the furthest the club have gone in European competition – the number was doubled.

Under coach Dusan Bayevic, Olympiakos have led the First Division all season and reached the semi-finals of the Greek Cup along with Panathinaikos, Athinaikos Vironas and Iraklis Thessaloniki.

PAOK Thessaloniki have replaced coach Angelos Anastasiades with Dutchman Arie Haan, who has signed an 18-month contract for a reported salary of £10,000 a month. It is his second spell with the club, having coached them in 1994 before returning to Holland to take charge of Feyenoord.

Panathinaikos have signed 35-year-old Brazilian defender Julio Cesar from Borussia Dortmund.

Lou Economopoulos

ALBANIA

Players go on hunger strike

NEWLY-PROMOTED Burreli have made history twice in the past few months – by winning promotion for the first time, then by going on hunger strike.

The protest followed a decision by the Albanian FA, who ruled that the club must play four successive home matches away from their ground, in the town of Burrel, 50 miles north of Tirana, after demonstrations by Burreli fans during a match with FK Tirana, which allegedly put players in danger.

Despite this, the match was played to a finish (a 0-0 draw), but an FA disciplinary commission imposed the ground suspension, and an appeals committee dismissed Burreli's protest.

The players then decided to take action, and said they would go without food until the FA overturned the ruling.

Burreli, who won promotion via a play-off at the end of last season, were bottom of the table with 14 points from 16 games. FK Tirana led with 34 from 17, a point ahead of Bylis Ballsh.

Foto Strakosha, the national team's goalkeeper, who plays his club football with Panionios in Greece, has been named Albania's Player of the Year at 34.

Gezim Nushi

DENMARK

Johansson ponders goals problem

DENMARK'S *ligalandshold*, a national side containing only players from the domestic League, played three successive 1-1 draws with Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador on a trip to South America.

They gave their most impressive performance in the first game, when they matched a reasonably strong Colombian side.

The tour gave coach Bo Johansson much food for thought before a friendly against World Cup semi-finalists Croatia in Split. Five of the *ligalandshold* made it into the squad and Ebbe Sand scored the winner in a surprise victory.

Even so, scoring remains the biggest problem facing Johansson, who has used a clutch of strikers without success. The best solution, of course, would be if Brian Laudrup changed his mind about quitting international soccer. Maybe his appetite will be whetted again when he begins playing for FC Copenhagen in the new Danish Superliga season.

Brother Michael, meanwhile, has settled into retirement in his new family home at Vedbaek, near Copenhagen. He may be given a job as an official football ambassador for the DBU, and has been working as a TV pundit.

He refuses to be drawn into the debate about his younger brother's decision to quit the national side, but believes that his last club boss at Ajax, former Denmark team-mate Morten Olsen, is the best long-term candidate to take over from Johansson.

Laudrup says: "He has all the qualities. I don't think it's absolutely necessary for the coach to be Danish – look at the job that Bo has done. But if you have someone as good as Morten there is no need to look elsewhere."

Jim Holden

SWEDEN

Nilsson tops 100

COVENTRY'S Roland Nilsson chalked up his 100th full international match in Sweden's recent 1-0 win over Tunisia.

He has been almost ever-present at right-back since making his debut in 1986, has appeared at two World Cup finals (1990 and 1994), as well as the victorious Euro 92 campaign, and will return to Sweden this summer to play for Helsingborgs.

"Rolle is a perfect team-player," says a local journalist. "His experience is awesome, and while he has always been good at going forward, he now displays a cool head in defence, too."

Nilsson is only the third Swede to gain a century of caps, after Bjorn Nordqvist (115) and Thomas Ravelli (143).

While smaller clubs have been losing players to the financial drawing power of Norway, IFK Gothenburg are doing their best to reverse the trend. Stopper Jon-Inge Holland is the third Norwegian signed by the club in a short period.

IFK have also been busy on the business front, announcing plans to go public. They hope to raise up to £15million from the stock market listing, some of which will be used to renovate their Gamla Ullevi stadium.

AIK have similar plans, with no less a figure than UEFA president Lennart Johansson as their consultant. Sweden's sporting administrators have taken a

Landmark figure...Roland Nilsson

stand against the idea of clubs going public, but IFK's bid will probably break the ice.

The serious knee injury suffered by Malmo midfielder Jens Fjellstrom in Sweden's Futsal championship tournament has caused much concern. Leading clubs may now prevent their stars from taking part in future tournaments.

Pentti Hietanen

NORWAY

Rosenborg earn their revenge

ROSENBORG repeated their triumph in the annual tournament for the best Scandinavian clubs in La Manga, Spain.

They took revenge on Stabaek for defeat in last year's Norwegian Cup Final by beating them in the Final of the Spanish tournament on penalties after a 2-2 draw.

Stabaek have brought in some new players, including Tobias Linderoth, son of Swedish coach Anders, who has added some creative spark.

National team manager Nils Johan Semb's luck seemed to have changed for the better as Norway managed a 0-0 draw against Italy in Pisa.

Semb will have Tore Andre Flo back from injury for the Euro 2000 game against Greece, but will have to do without captain Kjetil Rekdal, who broke a leg 30 seconds into Hertha Berlin's first game after the winter break in Germany.

Sigurd Odegaard

ICELAND

KR need a real celebration

ICELANDIC football entered a new age on February 21, as KR, the country's oldest club, celebrated their centenary with a reception at Reykjavik City Hall.

On the park, however, their main priority will be the championship. Despite having won it more times than any other club, 31 years have passed since KR last laid hands on the silverware.

In a watershed of a different kind, Bolton striker Arnar Gunnlaugsson became his country's most expensive player following his £2million transfer to Leicester.

Rab Christie

FINLAND

Forssell grabs the spotlight

MIKAEL FORSSELL'S two goals for Chelsea in their FA Cup fourth round replay against Oxford made the headlines in Finland at a time when the media normally concentrates on winter sports.

A year ago only a handful of experts knew about Forssell, who had a very difficult debut season for HJK Helsinki. Now he is being hailed as the country's best young prospect. At HJK, the reaction

Boy wonder...Mikael Forssell

to 17-year-old Forssell's sudden fame has been somewhat lukewarm. After all, they had to give him away on a free transfer.

But there is no doubting his ability. "Barring injuries, nothing can stop Mikael," says Jyrki Heliskoski, a seasoned coach of Finnish junior teams. "His technique is faultless, he is already very strong, and he has that vital killer instinct. Mikael is also as cool as they come."

Pentti Hietanen

CYPRUS

Think of a number...

THE federation and First Division clubs are discussing the League's future composition – and any number but the current 14 seems to have a chance.

Plans put forward so far are for 12, 10 or eight teams. In addition, there are schemes to increase the number of teams in the FA Cup, or to create a new knockout competition.

Soulis Theodosiou

MALTA

'Busu' still the best

THE NATIONAL team went down 3-0 at home to Yugoslavia – their fifth defeat out of five Euro 2000 qualifiers – but even so there were clear signs of improvement. This had also been true of two recent friendlies, a 2-1 win over Bosnia-Herzegovina and an unlucky last-minute defeat by Poland. Carmel Busutill's winner against Bosnia eased a lot of the pressure the team had been under. 'Busu' showed that even at 35 he is still a major asset.

On the domestic front, Birkirkara are back in the title chase after beating runaway leaders Valletta 1-0, then Sliema 3-2.

Domenico Aquilina

Pro-file Teddy Lucic

Controversial new Swede at Bologna

FEW TRANSFERS have caused more controversy in Sweden than defender Teddy Lucic's recent move from IFK Gothenburg to Italy's Serie A with Bologna.

The ink on Lucic's new contract had barely dried when IFK chairman Gunnar Larsson launched a bitter attack on both the player and his agent, Roger Ljung, the former Swedish World Cup defender.

"I am deeply disappointed," said Larsson. "Our negotiations began in July and we made Lucic a very good offer to extend his contract.

"But there always seemed to be something wrong, some small details to be looked at and the affair dragged on and on. Then, out of the blue, we heard that Lucic had signed for Bologna. All the time we were led to believe that he was still interested in staying with us."

The bottom line, of course, is that, under the Bosman ruling, IFK were left empty-handed from a deal that would have netted them nearly £2million had the player still been under contract.

Larsson openly blamed Lucic, or Ljung, rather, for deliberately playing for time to ensure that the defender would be free at the time of the transaction.

"That is nonsense," Lucic responds. "IFK know full well why I did not renew my contract with them. Players moving under the Bosman ruling is a fact of life in Europe today. I don't think I have let anyone down, nor do the fans of IFK. In fact, many have congratulated me and wished me good luck in Italy."

IFK's loss could be Bologna's gain – and perhaps Sweden's, too.

Lucic, whose father is Croatian and his mother a Finn, has never quite established himself in the national team after making his debut at Villa Park during the 1995 Umbro tournament. As a modern defender with no apparent weakness, perhaps Lucic has been a victim of his own versatility.

Good performances in Serie A will certainly enhance the 25-year-old's international chances, and the fact that Bologna already have two Swedes – Kennet Andersson and Klas Ingesson, both former Gothenburg stars – should help him settle down.

IFK signed Lucic from local rivals Frolunda, beating Crystal Palace to his signature. During his debut season in 1996, IFK won the League, but for the past two they have failed to dominate the scene.

Under new coach Reine Almqvist, several of IFK's old heroes have either been sold or retired as part of a drastic face-lift. Ironically, Lucic was one of the core players Almqvist insisted on retaining.

Pentti Hietanen

Fact file

Club Bologna (Ita)
Country Sweden
Born April 15, 1973
Previous clubs Lundby IF, Vastra Frolunda, IFK Gothenburg
International debut June 1995, v Brazil
International caps 19
Honours Swedish League 1996 (IFK Gothenburg)

Kyiv swansong...Andrii Shevchenko is off to Milan in the summer

New blood, bad preparation

UKRAINE

THE MEN at the helm at Kyiv Dynamo achieved a major objective over the winter break by retaining the services of the club's much-courted players for the Champions League quarter-final showdown with Real Madrid. Indeed, they even managed to strengthen the squad by introducing four new members. Yet Kyiv's preparations for the games against the holders began badly.

As usual, the club held a winter training camp at Ruit in Germany, and apart from intensive workouts the players were expecting to face several Bundesliga teams in warm-up matches. However, none was available because of involvement in the annual German five-a-side championship.

The outcome left Kyiv honorary president Grygory Surkis fuming. "I'm not satisfied," he said on his return home. "We've fulfilled our training programme, but we failed to find appropriate sparring partners."

After Germany, most of the club's star players attended another training camp, in Cyprus, while the rest of the squad contested the annual CIS Cup in Moscow. The likes of Serhii Rebrov, Andrii Shevchenko and Vladyslav Vaschuk then joined them to contest the Final, against Moscow Spartak, which Kyiv lost 2-1. However, the tournament allowed the club to test out a number of new signings, and four of them – defender Volodymir Ezerskiy (bought from Karpaty Lviv), midfielders Artem Yashkin and Sergey Kormiltsev (both Uralan) and forward Sergey Serebrennikov (Shynnik) – were included in the official squad list for the Champions League quarter-finals.

Shevchenko was still among them, although this will be his last European campaign with Kyiv. He has agreed to join Milan in the summer, and as a result of the deal the senior squad played an exhibition match at San Siro 10 days after the CIS Cup Final to introduce Shevchenko to the Milan fans. Though he did not score in Kyiv's 2-1 victory, coach Valerii Lobanovskyi was positive about the player's forthcoming challenge. "There is great pressure in the Italian championship, but I think Andrii is now ready," he said.

The Milan match was only Kyiv's fifth this year and Lobanovskyi said: "With such a small number of games it will be difficult to withstand Real. We are going to play four more matches before the first leg. That is not enough, but what can we do?"

Oleg Zadernovsky

RUSSIA

Spartak prove to be the best indoors

RUSSIAN champions Spartak beat Kyiv Dynamo 2-1 to win the Commonwealth of Independent States Cup – the annual indoor tournament in Moscow – for the fourth time.

Teams representing 14 of the 15 republics of the former Soviet Union got together for the seventh time in a nostalgic replica of a USSR championship played on a regular size pitch of artificial grass.

Only Uzbekistan were not represented (for the first time in the tournament's history) due to financial reasons which, according to local experts, may threaten the Cup's future next year.

Georgia sent a junior team to Moscow instead of a regular Tbilisi Dinamo squad, and Kyiv used a reserve line-up until the Final, when manager Valerii Lobanovskyi brought in his top stars.

Only Latvian champions Skonto Riga proved to be adequate rivals to Spartak and Kyiv. They nearly beat Kyiv in the early stage, which would have ruined the political (Russia v Ukraine in the Final) intrigue of the championship.

Almost every Moscow club approached Skonto playmaker Marian Pakhar after the tournament but he finally signed a four-year contract with Southampton.

The Russian Football Union has decided that the Euro 2000 qualifier against Andorra will be played in Vladikavkaz, which is only 50 kilometres from rebel Chechnya, where terrorist gangs have been on the rampage since the withdrawal of Russian troops in 1996.

The game will be played at the 40,000-seat home of Alaniya, Russia's 1995 champions, and will be the stadium's first full international.

Victor Gusev

POLAND

Chairmen on strike again?

AFTER a few months of silence there was another battle in the conflict described by newspapers as 'total war'.

Trouble began last year when several Polish FA officials were suspended by the Sports Minister, Jacek Debski, because they did not release control of association documents. FIFA threatened that if Debski did not change his mind, Polish teams would be suspended from international competition.

The minister withdrew the suspension, and expected that the FA chairman, Marian Dziurowicz, would resign as part of the arrangement – but he did not. As a result 12 club chairmen opposed to Dziurowicz ruled that their teams would not play in the official Polish League, and demanded that he resign.

They missed two match days but still the situation did not change. During an extraordinary Polish FA meeting the chairmen – who had founded an Autonomic Polish League – again called on Dziurowicz to go, and let them vote for a new board.

If he refused, they said they would go on strike and not let their teams play in the second half of the Polish League season. Again Dziurowicz stood firm, and the stalemate was continuing at press time.

National coach Janusz Wojcik took his players to Malta for 10 days of preparation before their Euro 2000 qualifying games with England and Sweden. Poland beat Malta 1-0 thanks to a Tomasz Klos header in the last minute, and won by the same score against local club Hibernians.

Wojcik's men then managed a 1-1 draw with Finland, Wojciech Kowalczyk's first-minute goal being the 1,000th in the national team's 76-year history.

Dariusz Kurowski

So far, so good...Predrag Mijatovic

YUGOSLAVIA

Big date in Belgrade

MARCH 27 is a big date in the minds of Yugoslavs everywhere: it is the day when the national team play Croatia for the first time since the break-up of the former country into its constituent states.

The 55,000-capacity Red Star stadium in Belgrade is the setting for a match in which Yugoslavia are overwhelming favourites, and they will be helped to a large extent by a ban on away supporters. The same condition will apply when Croatia stage the return leg in Zagreb on October 10.

The Slavs opened their Euro 2000 campaign back in November, with a 1-0 home win over the Republic of Ireland, and followed up with a 3-0 victory in Malta.

The performance of Mijatovic, Mihajlovic and the rest was below expectations, but at least they did their job and got what they went for – three points, no injuries and no bookings.

Vladimir Novak

MACEDONIA

Darko may be back again

FORMER Yugoslavia striker Darko Pancev may be back with Vardar Skopje for the third time since giving up playing. Pancev had two spells as manager of the club but was released each time. Now, however, he is acting as 'front man' for a Germany-based company, UFA Media, which is trying to take control.

Not surprisingly, the fans favour Pancev's operation, but the club officials and players seem to be inclined towards Makpetrol, a Macedonian enterprise.

Gjoko Hadzievski, who is in charge of the national squad, has been voted Coach of the Year. The Player of the Year award was shared by Srdjan Zaharievski of Stuttgart and Petar Milosevski of Trabzonspor.

Michel Stojmanovski

CZECH REPUBLIC

Cizek sale is cause for concern

SPARTA began the second round of the championship without a key player, Martin Cizek, who was sold by the club owners without prior knowledge of the technical staff as the winter break ended.

The purchasers, for a modest £400,000, were Munich 1860 and the speed of the transaction smacks of desperation. President Rezes and his son seem to have less and less time and money for football.

So it may well be a make-do-and-mend Sparta trying to retain the title and depending heavily on the League's leading goalscorer Horst Siegl, who has recovered from knee surgery.

In the battle for the FA chairmanship, Frantisek Chalovsky won a new mandate by a landslide.

Bob Vaughan

SLOVAKIA

National coach calls it quits

FRANTISEK LAURINEC, the newly-elected FA president, has been handed his first task – that of finding a new national coach. Dusan Galis decided to depart after Laurinec's election, without leading the team in a single game, and will now fully devote his time to Spartak Trnava's attempt to become champions.

With Karol Pecze contractually bound at Genclerbirligi in Turkey, Laurinec may turn to former international striker Josef Adamec or Zilina's coach Anton Jaros.

Slovan director Jan Ducky, the 50-year-old former economics minister, was shot dead in his home by masked gunmen. It is thought he may have had a hand in unofficial 'economic dealings'.

Bob Vaughan

ROMANIA

President put behind bars

DINAMO BUCHAREST president Petre Buduru has been jailed for his involvement in the smuggling of tobacco products. Despite appeals on his behalf from other clubs, the state prosecutor decided Buduru should remain in detention.

At Steaua, Ilie Dumitrescu, selected for three World Cup finals campaigns, has decided to retire at 30. He feels he can no longer play at the highest level for the club where he began a career that took him to Mexico and Spain after rather brief spells at Tottenham and West Ham. He is likely to become an agent.

Arges Pitesti and Dinamo Bucharest, both at training camps in Italy, decided on a friendly, which ended in what might be called a considerable punch-up.

Pitesti players, incensed that Dinamo's Ioan Lupescu seemed to be the chief aggressor, promptly resigned en masse from the players' union, of which Lupescu is currently vice-president. But they rejoined after accepting his apology.

Bob Vaughan

HUNGARY

'Danube Games' under threat

THE CRISIS at the FA could endanger the application with Austria to co-host the 'Danube Games' – the European Championship – in 2004.

Sports Minister Tamas Deutsch has suspended the FA for financial irregularities, but is under pressure from FIFA, which has demanded the reinstatement of the governing body.

If this is not done, Sepp Blatter and his minions are threatening to suspend Hungary from all international football competition.

Whether that is the correct course of action seems a moot point, but it is vital the FA gets its act together if Austria and Hungary are going to stave off Spain's challenge to stage the tournament.

Prime Minister Orban may hold a key to the solution. He would like the legendary Kalman Meszoly as the 'new broom' in charge of the FA.

Bob Vaughan

BULGARIA

Petrov is one shining light

MARTIN PETROV, dubbed the 'new Stoichkov', and who, like the master, plays on the left side and is speedy and incisive, may be given a chance to boost Bulgaria's flagging Euro 2000 campaign.

Petrov, too, can be a stormy petrel, as a suspension for spitting at a referee showed, but that has not prevented Servette from signing him from CSKA.

Bob Vaughan

Pro-file Yuriy Maximov

Ukrainian fighting to make German mark

STAR NAMES who fly the Ukraine nest and head west do not always soar to new heights. Werder Bremen midfielder Yuriy Maximov is only the latest example.

Despite their world-class status, neither playmaker Alexander Zavarov nor striker Igor Belanov got to grips with their new environment when they left Kyiv Dynamo for Juventus and Borussia Monchengladbach respectively, in the late 1980s.

A decade later, former Kyiv favourite Maximov finds himself in a similar predicament, still with all to prove after quitting his homeland for Germany in November 1997.

Maximov was a pillar of the Kyiv side who so impressed in qualifying for the quarter-finals of last season's Champions League, but he opted for a piece of the Bundesliga action rather than continuing the Euro adventure.

Yet Werder rarely have seen him in the big-hitting form of his days at the top of the bill in Ukraine. He started well enough, scoring the winner against Munich 1860 in December 1997 and hitting the target again in a victory over Arminia Bielefeld shortly after the winter break. Then disaster. He badly damaged a knee against Duisburg and was out for three months, his season virtually over. Nor did his problems end there. More knee trouble forced him to miss several weeks at the start of the current season, and recently an Achilles tendon was the source of some concern.

However, coach Felix Magath still has faith in the player. "We have been hampered by a string of injuries this season and particularly by the absences of our midfield playmakers, Maximov and [Andy] Herzog," he said. "It's a shame for Yuriy because he's new to the Bundesliga. Let's hope his luck changes. He's very accomplished and usually worth a fair number of goals a season."

Should Maximov's disappointing experience in Germany serve as a warning to the current Kyiv Dynamo players on the threshold of big-money transfers to the West – such as Serhii Rebrov – or who have already agreed to move, as in the case of Andrii Shevchenko? Maximov thinks not, saying: "Shevchenko and Rebrov are among the best in Europe, and I can't believe that they will fail to do themselves justice if and when they move abroad."

He adds: "I don't regret coming to Werder Bremen. They are a fine club, with lots of ambition, playing potential and first-rate facilities. A mid-table position doesn't reflect the talent here. If everyone is fit, we can challenge for a UEFA Cup place, and, of course, I hope to stay out of the treatment room and play a full part."

As well as finally asserting himself in Werder colours, Maximov aims to be involved in a major international fixture when Ukraine travel to France for a Euro 2000 tie at the end of March.

He says that he and his compatriots can spring an upset against the world champions, and adds: "Who would have predicted Kyiv Dynamo could go to Barcelona in last season's Champions League and win 4-0?

"We have a big-match temperament and the ability to match the French."

Nick Bidwell

Fact file

Club Werder Bremen (Ger)
Country Ukraine
Born December 8, 1968, in Dnipropetrovsk
Previous clubs Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk, Kyiv Dynamo
International debut October 1992, v Belarus
International caps 17 (5 goals)
Honours Ukrainian League 1995, 1996, 1997 (Kyiv); Ukrainian Cup 1996 (Kyiv)

BRAZIL

Only in Brazil, continued

Brian Homewood finds a tournament with grounds for confusion

WHEN Vasco da Gama played Fluminense in the Rio-Sao Paulo tournament last month, Vasco, one linesman and the reserve referee went to Sao Januario stadium, while Fluminense, the match referee and the other linesman went to Maracana.

Although Brazilian fans have become used to teams refusing to turn up for matches, something at which Vasco have become the leading specialists, nobody has experienced an incident in which teams and officials have gone to different stadiums for the same match.

How did Brazil's football directors, who have proved themselves capable of conjuring up the most bizarre situations, come up with this one? It's a long story but basically it involves the usual combination of bungling incompetence and attempts to be 'esperto' (which falls somewhere between cunning, slimy, untrustworthy and devious), plus the Carnival holiday.

Competition rules stated that the horribly decrepit Maracana should be the venue for all matches in Rio. By the time Vasco and Fluminense met, however, the former were already qualified and the latter were already out. Vasco vice-president Eurico Miranda suggested the game be switched to the smaller Sao Januario stadium, which, coincidence or not, belongs to Vasco, and the president of the Rio federation, Eduardo Viana, agreed.

This decision, however, was taken on the Friday before Carnival week. Fluminense did nothing until the Wednesday of the game, when they decided to take a stance and turn up at Maracana. In the meantime, faxes, sent in the midst of Carnival, went astray, so that only two of the four match officials were told of the change. At a meeting the next day, the eight competing clubs voted 7-1 (Vasco being the dissenting voice) to award the game to Fluminense by a walkover, and that was the end of the matter.

Vasco qualified for the semi-finals, along with Sao Paulo, Santos and Botafogo, of a tournament that was nothing more than a pre-season kickaround for the eight big clubs in Rio and Sao Paulo. Even so, it was the first major confusion of the Brazilian season, which began with a truly bewildering array of competitions.

Down south, a tournament run on similar lines to Rio-Sao Paulo and called the Copa do Sul featured the biggest clubs from that region.

At the same time, the state championships began without the big clubs. In the Paulista (Sao Paulo state), 12 clubs were fighting for eight places in the second stage, when the big four (Palmeiras, Corinthians, Sao Paulo and Santos) enter the fray.

In the Carioca (Rio de Janeiro state), Olaria, America, Itaperuna, Cabofriense and Volta Redonda were playing a preliminary stage from which two teams would join Vasco, Flamengo, Fluminense, Botafogo, Madureira, Friburgense, Americano and Bangu in the first stage proper.

The latter competition immediately ran into problems. America, peeved at not being included automatically in the championship proper, refused to play and said they would take their case to court. A further complication was that, although the five teams played each other twice, rules decreed that one team from Rio (America or Olaria) and one from the interior (Itaperuna, Cabofriense or Volta Redonda) would go through no matter what order the teams finished.

America's sulk meant that Olaria would qualify automatically, even if they finished last – a position they occupied at the time of writing.

Great start...Paulo Cesar Carpegiani

At the same time, the Copa Brasil was getting under way. This straight knockout tournament features teams from all over the country, and in the first round pits major clubs against sides from the remotest parts of the country.

Finally, Palmeiras and Corinthians were getting ready for the Libertadores Cup, in which they face Paraguay's Cerro Porteno and Olimpia in their first-round group.

Paulo Cesar Carpegiani, the Brazilian who took Paraguay to last year's World Cup, made an excellent start at Sao Paulo, who lost only one match on their way to the Rio-Sao Paulo semi-finals. Mario Zagallo, Brazil's manager in France, made an equally good start in charge of Portuguesa, who won six of their first eight games.

Less happy was Palmeiras manager Luiz Felipe Scolari, better known as Big Phil. Irritated with a lacklustre display against Sao Raimundo in the Copa Brasil, he complained that his players were flabby and issued lists comparing the current and ideal weights of each one to prove his point. He then hinted that some of his players were feigning injury before the Sao Raimundo game to save themselves for the Libertadores Cup.

IN BRIEF

Same again for 2002 World Cup

THE SOUTH AMERICAN Confederation (CONMEBOL) decided to play qualifying matches for the next World Cup in the same way as for the last when nine countries played each other home and away with the top four going through to the finals.

Last time, Brazil, as holders, did not participate in the qualifying round, but this time all 10 countries are due to meet each other, playing 18 games each.

The top four countries will qualify automatically for the finals in Japan and South Korea, while the fifth still has a chance to go through via a play-off with the winners of the Oceania zone. Matches would take place between the end of March 2000 and mid-November 2001, but FIFA has yet to officially approve the programme.

Meanwhile, CONMEBOL is worried about building delays on three new stadiums in Paraguay for the Copa America, which is due to begin on June 29.

Eric Weil

Argentina retain junior title

WITH a team composed mostly of players with First Division experience, hosts Argentina retained the South American Junior (Under-20) Championship, which was played at Mar del Plata and Tandil in January. The top four qualified for April's World Youth Cup in Nigeria, where Argentina will be defending their world title.

The other qualifiers were Uruguay, Brazil and Paraguay.

The South American Junior Championship, first played in 1954 and now held every two years, has been won seven times each by Brazil and Uruguay, and only three times by Argentina, but, curiously, each time they have won it they have gone on to take the world title.

Eric Weil

No pay, no play

ONE EARLY match in the opening championship in **PERU** was decided by walkover, when Juan Aurich refused to travel to play Melgar because their players had not been paid.

A week later, the match between Alianza Lima and Melgar was not played because of a dispute between two companies over TV rights.

In **VENEZUELA**, Minerven and Atletico Zamora were relegated before this season's closing championship even began because they were unable to pay off debts. This left just 10 clubs in the First Division.

ARGENTINA

Players go for a 10th strike victory

A PLAYERS' strike, already three weeks long at press time, was holding up the start of the national closing championship. This is the 10th strike since the start of professional soccer in Argentina in 1931, but this one is different from the others.

All that the First Division players are asking is that their colleagues in lower divisions be allowed to play. Games in all but the top division were banned by court order last November, because of hooliganism – particularly evident in the lower divisions – so a week before the start of the top division's closing championship the players said they would not play until all divisions were allowed to do so

Since then, they have stood firm, in spite of pressure from the FA, TV and even President Menem.

In the past, players have gone on strike for various reasons, including freedom of contract, for the abolition of the maximum wage, union recognition and to stop attempts to limit the number of professionals at each club...and have won every occasion.

This time the courts are dealing with the matter and they are not hurrying. When the ban on lower division soccer is lifted, it will be under certain safety conditions, which clubs and the FA have said in the past cannot be carried out or that they did not want to carry out.

Meanwhile, the bankruptcy proceedings against one of Argentina's big six sides, Racing Club – winners of the Intercontinental Cup against Celtic in 1967 – are becoming more critical.

The courts have twice postponed the deadline for payment of around £80million of immediate debts. Now the FA have come to the rescue by guaranteeing the debt, under certain conditions, and it remains to be seen whether the creditors accept.

Eric Weil

COLOMBIA

Quindio hit by earthquake

DEPORTIVO QUINDIO, from the earthquake-wrecked town of Armenia, lost two newly-signed Argentinians – Ruben Bihurriet and Diego Montenegro – who were killed in the disaster, which also took the life of former Paraguayan player Casimiro Avalos.

The club had to move to Rionegro to start the championship, yet after three games trailed leaders Independiente Sante Fe by only one point, and managed to beat champions Deportivo Cali 2-0 away to end Cali's 10-match unbeaten run.

Argentinian coach Reinaldo Merlo has replaced Gabriel Gomez at Atletico Nacional, who field only Colombian players and also have previously relied on home country coaches.

Merlo changed his new team's formation from 4-4-2 to 3-5-2, and they ended Once Caldas' 32-game unbeaten home run with a 2-0 win.

Medellin rivals Independiente brought goalkeeper Rene Higuita back from Mexico's Veracruz, while Deportivo Cali signed former Boca Juniors strikers Emiliano Ray and John Jairo Trellez.

Eric Weil

Back in town...Rene Higuita

Union Tachira (winners of the opening tournament) and Nueva Cadiz almost went the same way, amid the financial crisis that has beset the sport.

In **CHILE**, a fan was killed and four players arrested for fighting – and all this before the League season got under way.

Trouble broke out in a so-called friendly between Colo Colo and Universidad de Chile. Ricardo Rojas (Universidad) and Marcos Villaseca (Colo Colo) were detained in police cells overnight for causing violence, while Universidad's Luis Musrri and Christian Uribe of Colo Colo were cautioned, then released.

Four days after the game – won, incidentally, 5-1 by Colo Colo – a Colo Colo supporter was beaten to death by a gang of Universidad fans.

In **PARAGUAY**, the start of the championship was held up by players striking for medical insurance and freedom of contract.

When it did get under way, Rodolfo Fernandez made up for lost time by putting newly-promoted Resistencia ahead against Sportivo Luqueno within a minute. This was the fastest League goal for 10 years, but it proved to be in vain as his team went down 4-2.

Eric Weil

Pro-file Ze Maria

Busy Brazilian making up for lost time

BRAZIL'S right-backs had a strange 1998. Mario Zagallo, the then coach, stressed that it was the weakest position in his team. In fact, Cafu was viewed with such suspicion that when Brazil lost at home to Argentina in April, he was the victim of the Maracana crowd's full fury. "I thought they were going to lynch me," he said afterwards.

Then, to the pleasant surprise of many, came Cafu's excellent World Cup performances, which were rewarded with his appointment as captain by new coach Vanderley Luxemburgo.

For Ze Maria, the year brings less happy memories. He had chances to establish himself as first-choice right-back when he travelled to the USA to dispute the Gold Cup...but he soon felt like King Midas in reverse.

"I couldn't do myself justice," he says. "I went down with a serious groin problem. I tried to run, to give passes and crosses, but I couldn't do it." He tried to play through the pain, but his inevitable poor performances and Brazil's humiliating defeat by the United States meant that Ze Maria's World Cup dream was over.

He recalls the event with some bitterness, saying: "The Brazil management knew I had a problem, but when they announced the World Cup squad they didn't even call to ask how I was."

The groin problem was also putting a strain on his relationship with Parma. A wonderful crosser of the ball, Ze Maria had become a key part of the club's drive to land their first Italian championship.

"But when the pain struck the medical department weren't able to clear it up," he said. "Worse, it sometimes seemed that they didn't believe I had a problem, that I was faking because I didn't want to play. It wasn't true."

So Parma loaned Ze Maria to Perugia, and after three months' work the problem was solved and he returned to action. When Vasco da Gama proposed a loan move back to Brazil, he jumped at the chance.

"Perugia are not in the race to be champions of anything," he points out, "but Vasco look to win every tournament they enter. With them I have the chance to play in the Libertadores Cup, which I've never done. Playing well for Vasco will make it easier for me to get back in the Brazil team."

He first broke into the side in the build-up to the 1996 Olympics, and Zagallo was ecstatic. "I've found my right-back," he said. Whereas Cafu was seen as a strong runner whose final ball disappointed, Ze Maria played with his head up, giving intelligent passes and accurate crosses.

"I had everything to be the first choice," he recalls. Instead, he had to watch the previously unknown Ze Carlos step in for his international debut when Cafu was suspended for the World Cup semi-final. "Obviously, I was thinking it could have been me out there. But that is in the past and I'm looking for another chance."

Tim Vickery

Fact file

Club Vasco da Gama (loan)
Country Brazil
Born July 25, 1973
Previous clubs Portuguesa, Flamengo (loan), Parma, Perugia (loan)
International debut August 1996, v Russia
International caps 15
Honours Olympic bronze medal 1996; Rio state championship 1996

No, it was not a fluke!

The USA beat Germany fair and square, says Paul Gardner

Winning smiles...celebration time against Germany

UNITED STATES

LESS THAN a year ago, the USA's 1998 World Cup adventure got off to a disastrous start with a 2-0 defeat by Germany in Paris. Coach Steve Sampson's team were never in the game, and never recovered.

They went on to lose all three of their matches and finished with the worst record of all 32 finalists.

The poor showing cost Sampson his job. A new coach, Bruce Arena, arrived, determined to change the composition of the team, to bring in new blood. And, suddenly, things look a lot brighter for the USA.

In February, those pesky Germans arrived in Florida for a friendly, and were soundly beaten 3-0. While the soccer world marvelled at how bad the Germans were, the other side of that result was not so clearly recognised.

The Americans had played extremely well. This was not a fluke, like the 1-0 win over England in the 1950 World Cup. Nor was it a defensive performance like last year's 1-0 win over Brazil, in which goalkeeper Kasey Keller's heroics made the difference. In this game, goalkeeper Tony Meola had virtually nothing to do.

The US were the better team in every respect. Technically better, tactically better, better prepared, and showing much more spirit than the Germans. It is not an exaggeration to say that Germany were never in the game, that they were completely knocked out of their stride by the confidence of the Americans, by their constant pressure and by their deadly finishing.

Jovan Kirovski got the rout under way with a breathtaking goal. A run down the left, a sudden swerve that left Markus Babbel rooted to the spot, and a ferocious cross-shot that flashed across keeper Oliver Kahn and high into the far corner. Kirovski, once on Manchester United's books, now plays in Germany, with Second Division Fortuna Koln.

The USA's second goal came from Tony Sanneh, who recently signed for Hertha Berlin. And the third was scored by Claudio Reyna who plays – but more often sits on the bench – for Wolfsburg.

Reyna's first-class performance evidently caused some embarrassment back in Germany. Wolfgang Wolf (yes, that is the name of the Wolfsburg coach), who had once suggested that Reyna should forget about playing for the US national team, found himself under pressure to shift Reyna off the bench and into the starting line-up. "Suddenly, I'm a better player," joked Reyna.

Arena, as always, kept his enthusiasm under control. "Yes, it's a good win for us," he said, "but we're not going to blow it out of context. It's a friendly international match in February of 1999."

Germany keeper Kahn seemed to be closer to the mark when he wryly commented: "Oh yes, we're all happy – happy we didn't lose by more."

But there was another defeat for Germany – in a related two-game series at Under-23 level. The Germans beat the USA 1-0, then went down 2-0. Maybe a trend is developing. Only a month before these games, a youth tournament in Florida had featured an Under-17 team from Bayern Munich. They were beaten 9-0 (right, nine-nil) by a select team from the north-east of the US. "I might have under-estimated the Americans a bit," was the only comment from coach Hermann Hummels.

But Bayern turned to the old soccer rule: when you can't beat 'em, sign 'em. They went after striker Jordan Cila, who scored five goals against them. Landon Donovan, another young American striker and a member of the Under-17 national team, has been signed by Bayer Leverkusen.

Major shock at Major League

THE KEY MAN during the first three years of Major League Soccer's existence, without any doubt, was deputy commissioner Sunil Gulati. He has been in charge of player contracts (they are all signed centrally, by the League), the only League official with any deep knowledge of football, and a highly intelligent and articulate presence at media conferences.

Gulati also has been deeply involved with the United States Soccer Federation and its programmes to bolster the strength of the various national teams.

Towards the end of February, Gulati suddenly went missing from his MLS office. Then news seeped out: he had been fired by Commissioner Doug Logan.

The cause was supposed to be "abuse of power" – specifically that Gulati had misled Logan and MetroStars owner Stuart Subotnick about the details of the contract signed by national team midfielder Tab Ramos.

The other owners were not happy with Logan's decision. An emergency meeting of the League's management committee was held in Dallas. After five hours, a non-decision was reached: Logan's decision had to be supported, but some way also had to be found for Gulati to continue his association with the League.

No statement announcing Gulati's firing was ever issued. But an absurdly short press release stated that Logan was talking to "former deputy commissioner Sunil Gulati".

That Gulati had made a bad error in not discussing the contract details was clear, but the punishment seemed way out of order. Subotnick drew the questionable assumption that Gulati had lied to him, and pressed for his dismissal. Logan quickly complied. So quickly that the move aroused strong suspicions that he was seizing an opportunity to get rid of his deputy.

The relationship between Logan and Gulati was awkward from the start. Logan, who on his appointment in 1995 cheerfully admitted that he did not know anything about soccer, had been put in charge of one of the most soccer-savvy people in the USA. Inevitably, Logan – who is supposed to be the public figurehead of the League – has been operating for three years in his deputy's shadow.

Gulati proved to be a much more charismatic personality. It has been common to see him dealing smoothly and good-humouredly with complicated technical questions from the press, while the superfluous Logan sits silently alongside. Silent and, naturally, resentful.

That festering resentment has now impelled Logan to execute a power play that has removed Gulati from the front line. But the idea of Logan, unimpressive and wooden at the microphone, dealing with any football matters that are even remotely technical is embarrassing to contemplate.

For a League that needs all the publicity it can get, this looks like a pretty dumb move.

MEXICO

New-look team make a fair start

THE rejuvenated national squad – only seven of the 1998 World Cup 22 remain – lost 1-0 to Argentina in a friendly in Los Angeles, their first international of the new season.

The team, one of the youngest in Mexican history, deserved better, but lost to a goal that seemed clearly offside.

The squad then made the long trip to Hong Kong to compete in the Carlsberg Cup, which they won by beating the hosts and Egypt.

At home, Toluca and America shared the lead after the first few matches of the Summer League, but it is too early to predict a winner.

The general level of competence is good, and most of the 18 clubs have reason to be confident.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter and his assistant, Michel Platini, visited Mexico for the opening of the federation's training centre, jointly financed by the Televisa and Television Azteca operations.

Carlos Ramirez

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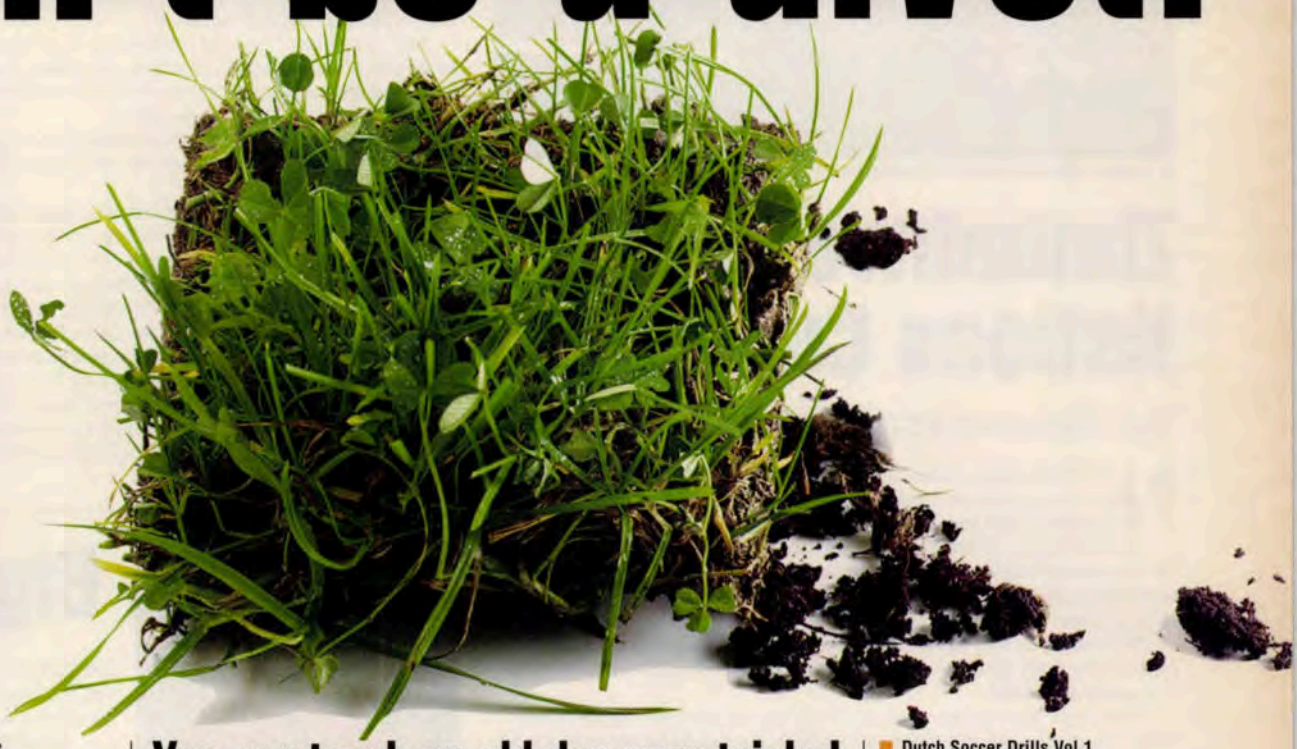

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PROFESSIONAL COACHING EQUIPMENT

In trouble...the Zimbabwe FA headquarters

Zimbabwe lose Nations Cup 2000

Mark Gleeson on the upheaval over showpiece event

NEXT YEAR'S African Nations Cup finals have been taken away from Zimbabwe, because of the country's inability to get stadium refurbishment under way and the lack of visible government support.

The Confederation of African Football sent two fact-finding missions to the country, but they reported little progress, and Zimbabwe's participation in the civil war in the former Zaire, plus their economic ills and mounting domestic political problems, added to the concern.

The Nations Cup is African soccer's showpiece, and CAF – 80 per cent of whose revenue comes from the finals – was not prepared to run the risk that it might be an organisational shambles.

The decision drew a mixed reaction in Zimbabwe, with many blaming the country's FA for its inability to convince confederation officials that it could run the event. It is a major embarrassment for Zimbabwe FA president Leo Mugabe, nephew of the nation's president, Robert, who has now made a belated entry into the furore and is hoping to get CAF to change the decision.

That is highly unlikely, leaving Zimbabwe out of the qualifiers and raising doubts over the future of new national coach Clemens Westerhof, the eccentric Dutchman brought in to prepare the team for the finals.

This is the fourth time in just over a decade that the Nations Cup finals have been moved from their original host. CAF have now invited bids for a substitute and will make a final decision in Conakry, Guinea, on March 15. The most likely candidates are Egypt, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria and South Africa, with Nigeria the favourites.

ASEC babes do the business

AFRICAN SUPER CUP

AFRICAN champions ASEC Abidjan turned out their youth team for the one-off African Super Cup match against Esperance of Tunisia – and still ended up winning 3-1, to take their second major trophy in two months.

ASEC, the African Champions League winners, were preparing their first team for the start of the new Ivory Coast season, and decided to play juniors from their football academy against an Esperance side brimming with internationals and several campaigners from the World Cup in France.

Africa's Super Cup is decided annually between the winners of the Champions League and the Cup-winners Cup, with the match being played on the former team's ground.

ASEC's babes delighted the crowd with their play and deservedly took the lead after 35 minutes when Venance Zere dribbled past three defenders to score.

Esperance managed to force extra time when Tunisia's World Cup goalkeeper, Chokri El Ouaer, the Esperance captain, converted a last-minute penalty after Tiene Siaka handled, but ASEC sealed the game with two goals from Zere and Dindane.

It was a momentous victory, which denied the Tunisians their chance to become the first side to win the Super Cup twice. But they were magnanimous in defeat.

"We should have beaten this group of kids but they were too good," said Esperance's new Nigerian international signing, Gabriel Okolosi, while club president Slim Chiboub added: "My team took a thrashing from a group of motivated young players with spirit and determination. It was pleasing to see."

Mark Gleeson

In Liverpool...Rigobert Song

Big names

AFRICAN footballers rarely have been in as much demand as they were during the recent mid-winter period in Europe.

Several high-profile transfers of African internationals have put players from the continent back in vogue.

English football, traditionally wary or unaware of African talent, suddenly welcomed the arrival of two Cameroonians, including their World Cup captain, and Nwankwo Kanu, skipper of the Nigerian Olympic gold-medal winning team.

Kanu moved from Internazionale to Arsenal and ran into a furore on his

ROUND UP

CENTRAL AFRICA

FORMER **MALAWI** national team coach and captain Rueben Malola has died at the age of 46. He led Malawi to an East and Central African Senior Challenge Cup in 1988 as coach, having captained the national team.

Malola also had two spells as national team coach and worked in Kenya at AFC Leopards.

Bata Bullets keep up their unbeaten run at the top of the table in Malawi's Super League, leading defending champions Telecom Wanderers by four points.

Bob Mpinganjira scored eight goals in Bata's 9-1 win over bottom side University. Understandably, he is the leading scorer in the League with 17 goals.

EAST AFRICA

TANZANIAN striker Ally Yusuph has been named as Footballer of the Year on the Indian Ocean island of **MAURITIUS**. Yusuph helped Scouts Club to win the championship last season.

There is a row blazing in **KENYA** over its Footballer of the Year award. Journalists on the panel nominated Nick Yakhama of Mumias Sugar as the winner, but the Kenyan federation objected to the choice and chose Tom Rero of Eldoret instead. They also changed the Referee of the Year award winner and the recipient of a fair-play award.

The journalists have protested at the decisions and withdrawn from the panel for future awards.

SUDAN's Al Khhabah Cup has been won by Al Hilal, who beat Al Merreikh 2-0 in the Final.

WEST AFRICA

THE continuing civil war in **SIERRA LEONE** has forced the country to withdraw from the African Nations Cup qualifying competition. This leaves only Morocco, Guinea and Togo in Group 3, with the chance that Morocco also could be withdrawn if they are to host the Nations Cup finals in place of Zimbabwe next year.

Samuel Osei Kuffour, the Bayern Munich defender, has been named **GHANA's** Footballer of the Year. Hearts of Oak striker Joe Fameyeh was named best player in the domestic League and won the top scorer award.

Former Ghanaian champions Obuasi Goldfields have appointed Dutchman Hans Van der Pluijm as their new coach. He previously worked at FC Den Bosch and Excelsior in Holland.

Ghanaian international Emmanuel Osei Kuffour has joined Hearts of Oak from Cape Coast Dwarfs.

Former **IVORY COAST** international Yousouf Fofana, who played at Monaco in his professional career, has been appointed as assistant to ASEC Abidjan's new coach Jean-Marc Guillou.

NORTH AFRICA

RABAH SAADANE has begun his second spell in charge of the **ALGERIA** national team after the resignation of

MAJOR AFRICAN TRANSFERS IN EUROPE	
Augustine AHINFUL (Gha)	Uniao Leiria (Por) to Venezia (Ita)
Jonathan AKONNOR (Gha)	Okwahu United (Gha) to VfL Wolfsburg (Ger)
AKWA (Ang)	Benfica (Por) to Al Shabab (Sau)
Mourad BOUNOUA (Tun)	Stuttgart Kickers (Ger) to Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger)
James DEBBAH (Lbr)	Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) to Antalyaspor (Tur)
Mamadou DIALLO (Sen)	Lillestrom (Nor) to MSV Duisburg (Ger)
Malick DIOP (Sen)	Jeanne d'Arc (Sen) to Strasbourg (Fra)
Ali El KHATTABI (Mor)	Heerenveen (Hol) to Sparta Rotterdam (Hol)
Samuel ETO'O (Cam)	Real Madrid (Spa) to Espanyol (Spa)
Marc-Vivien FOE (Cam)	Lens (Fra) to West Ham (Eng)
Tchiressoa GUEL (IvC)	ASEC Abidjan (IvC) to Marseille (Fra)
Junaid HARTLEY (SAf)	Lens (Fra) to Seven Stars (SAf)
Awudu ISSAKA (Gha)	Auxerre (Fra) to Munich 1860 (Ger)
Nwankwo KANU (Nga)	Internazionale (Ita) to Arsenal (Eng)
Kaba MANE (Sen)	Nice (Fra) to Charleroi (Bel)
Aaron MOKOENA (SAf)	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) to Ajax Amsterdam (Hol)
Blaise N'KUFFO (DRC)	Grasshopper (Swi) to Lugano (Swi)
Mike OBIKU (Nga)	Avispa Fukuoka (Jap) to AZ '67 Alkmaar (Hol)
James OBIORAH (Nga)	Anderlecht (Bel) to Grasshopper (Swi)
Gabriel OKOLOSI (Nga)	Waldhof Mannheim (Ger) to Esperance (Tun)
Mohamed OMARA (Egy)	Al Ahli (Egy) to Hansa Rostock (Ger)
Ahmed OUATTARA (IvC)	Basel (Swi) to Extremadura (Spa)
Djima OYAWOLE (Tog)	Metz (Fra) to Troyes (Fra)
Donald-Olivier SIE (IvC)	ASEC Abidjan (IvC) to Toulouse (Fra)
Jero SHAKPOKE (Nga)	Reggiana (Ita) to Bologna (Ita) (loan)
Rigobert SONG (Cam)	Salernitana (Ita) to Liverpool (Eng)
Charles WHITTLE (Gha)	Neuchatel Xamax (Swi) to Rapid Vienna (Aut)
Christopher WREH (Lbr)	Arsenal (Eng) to AEK Athens (Gre) (loan)
John ZAKI (Nga)	ASEC Abidjan (IvC) to CS Sfaxien (Tun)

head for Europe

debut by playing a major part in the goal that caused so much controversy in the fifth round FA Cup tie against Sheffield United. The game was later replayed because Arsenal would not accept a goal scored against the spirit of the game.

Cameroon's Rigobert Song has gone to Liverpool to shore up their porous defence after a brief spell at Salernitana in Italy, and Marc-Vivien Foe finally moved from French champions Lens to West Ham after his long injury lay-off.

African club champions ASEC Abidjan have lost three key players from their title-winning side.

Captain Tchiressoa Guel has gone to Marseille, Donald-Olivier Sie to Toulouse, and Nigerian international John Zaki, who scored in the Final against Dynamos of Zimbabwe last December, is now with Tunisian club CS Sfaxien.

The number of African footballers in the top two divisions in Europe has now pushed over the 300 mark, with a regular presence in Serie A, Spain's *Primera Liga* and France.

Mark Gleeson

Meziane Ighil, but says he is doing the job only in a caretaker capacity.

Moussa Saib, now with Tottenham, is to quit international football after being relegated to the Algerian bench.

CA Bizerte are the surprise leaders in the play-off phase of the League in **TUNISIA**. They head Esperance by two points.

Al Ahli are well on course for a record-setting sixth successive title in **EGYPT**, having opened up a seven-point lead over Zamalek.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

LESOTHO and **SOUTH AFRICA** have won through to the quarter-finals of the Cosafa Castle Cup, with victories in their respective first round matches. Lesotho beat Namibia 1-0 at home with a goal from Teele Ntsonyana, while South Africa came from a goal down to beat Botswana 2-1 away.

George Chilufya of **ZAMBIAN** club Nkana FC and Dabid Chilufya from Konkola Blades have signed for Finnish club RoPS Rovianemi.

Zambia's assistant coach Benjamin Bwalya, 37, has died after contracting malaria during the Nations Cup qualifier in Madagascar in January. Bwalya was the elder brother of former African Footballer of the Year Kalusha Bwalya, who now plays in Dubai.

LESOTHO have named Monaheng Monyane and Pitso Mosothoane as new national team coaches.

Mark Gleeson

NEXT MONTH

United States
Bruce Arena's new-look national side

Bordeaux
Club focus on the French League leaders

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MAY ISSUE ON SALE APRIL 2

JAPAN

Seven up

Changes all round for new season

THE J.LEAGUE starts its seventh season with lower budgets, fewer big-name stars and some very young squads, especially at clubs such as JEF United, Verdy Kawasaki and Bellmare Hiratsuka, where the crunch has been severe.

The League also has 10 more teams, an extra division and, for the first time, draws, though only after extra time.

Kashima Antlers and Jubilo Iwata are firm favourites to continue their domination, but Nagoya Grampus Eight at last seem deadly serious about their title challenge. They have signed three national team players – Narazaki, Yamaguchi and Lopes – plus some of the brightest stars out of high school.

Nagoya new boy...Wagner Lopes

Steve Perryman's Shimizu S-Pulse are another team to watch. They will miss Oliva in midfield, but the signing of Tasaka from Bellmare should help to plug the gap. Yokohama F. Marinos complete the five most fancied. The combination of stars such as Kawaguchi, Nakamura and Jo from Marinos, and Nagai, Miura and Hato from Flugels, highlights the benefits of combining two of last year's strongest teams.

The chasing pack will draw some encouragement from the fact that Antlers must get used to life without Jorinho, and Jubilo without Dunga. Antlers also have lost home advantage for the First Stage because their ground is being refurbished for 2002. On the positive side, the club have two exciting young strikers, Yanagisawa and Hirase, who are challenging the veterans, Mazinho and Hasegawa, for first-team places.

Jubilo have said goodbye not only to Dunga but also to manager Valmir. His replacement is Takashi Kuwabara, who led them to the 1997 title and is now leading a resurgence of Japanese managers. Eight of the J.League's 16 Division One clubs are under Japanese guidance. Jubilo started their season early, advancing through the round-robin East Asian quarter-finals of the Champions Cup.

The most intriguing new manager is former Standard Liege and Beveren coach Rene Desaeyere at Cerezo Osaka. Cerezo retain a strong Korean flavour. They still have Hwang Sun-hong and have now signed former Sanfrecce striker Noh Jung-yoong, who has been playing in Holland, and Japanese-Korean striker Shintetsu Gen from Verdy.

Kashiwa Reysol have signed South Korean Hong Myung-bo from Bellmare to prop up their defence.

Mike Plastow & Michi Ishijima

2002 WORLD CUP

Blatter promises review of Asian places

A SIX-MEMBER delegation from the Asian Football Confederation pleaded for more places at the 2002 World Cup finals when they met FIFA president Sepp Blatter in Switzerland.

The six presented comprehensive documentation in support of their case, following FIFA's decision in December 1998 to allocate only two berths to Asia, in addition to those granted to the co-hosts, Japan and South Korea.

Blatter assured the delegation that he would take up the matter with FIFA's executive when it convenes on March 12.

The meeting came in the wake of a threat from Asian nations that they would boycott the 2002 World Cup.

"We are for what is fair and right," said AFC chief executive Peter Velappan. "Asia constitutes a fourth of the FIFA membership and has 40 per cent of the world's population. Our interests and demands cannot be overlooked. The AFC is very concerned that the FIFA decision, if upheld, will have far-reaching consequences for the development of football in this continent.

"The AFC wants the 2002 World Cup to be an outstanding success, and we want to be a part of it. We are confident the meeting with Mr Blatter will prove fruitful and that an amicable solution to the problem will be reached."

Azam Mahmood

IN BRIEF

OCEANIA

Sermanni joins Canberra Cosmos

SCOTSMAN Tommy Sermanni has made a creditable start in **AUSTRALIAN** soccer's most unenviable job – coach of Canberra Cosmos.

Sermanni took over when Cosmos were coming towards the end of a 13-match losing streak from the start of the season, but now they have eight points. Even so, they have only half the points of second-bottom Melbourne Knights.

Glasgow-born Sermanni was a journeyman midfielder in Britain, playing for Albion Rovers, Blackpool and Torquay. He ended his career in Australia and began coaching. Before moving to Cosmos he guided the Australian national women's team.

At the top of the table, South Melbourne have extended their lead to four points over Sydney United.

Steve Sumner, the former Preston North End apprentice who captained **NEW ZEALAND** at the 1982 World Cup finals, has won a place on the council of Soccer New Zealand, Kiwi soccer's administrative body.

Another ex-international, Mark Burgess (better known as a test cricketer), also won election to the seven-man board.

The most significant new council member, however, may be Kevin Stratful, a one-time National League player who is now an executive of Dominion Breweries. According to media reports, DB is considering sponsoring a relaunched National League.

In the first venture beyond Oceania by a **FIJI** selection for 18 years, the Olympic side had a successful trip to Singapore. They drew 0-0 with Singapore's Olympic team, defeated the Under-23s 3-2, and would have shared the honours in a two-match series with the Singapore senior side but for an equaliser in injury time of the second encounter. The earlier game had been lost 2-0.

With Australia assured, as hosts, of a place at Sydney 2000, the Fiji FA recognises that the next Olympics represent the nation's best chance to be involved in the finals of a major international tournament, and the team's preparations reflect this.

They are coached by former Uruguayan international Washington Gonzalez and they feature in the Fijian League. Further ground-breaking tours are being planned.

Paul Moon

MIDDLE EAST

Al Ittihad take Council Cup

SAUDI dominance of the Gulf Cooperation Council Club championship was extended when Al Ittihad of Jeddah won the title for the first time.

Al Ittihad, the oldest club in Saudi Arabia (they were founded in 1943), won all five games, scoring 17 goals and conceding only four.

Saudi clubs have now won the title 10 times out of 16.

Kuwait's Al Salmiya were second and Bahrain's West Rifa'a third. Rashed Jamal of West Rifa'a was leading scorer with seven.

Nigerian international centre-forward Rashidi Yekini proved an instant hit on his debut for Al Shabab in **SAUDI ARABIA**, when he netted a hat-trick in the 3-0 defeat of Al Ansar. This took Al Shabab to fourth in the table, which is headed by Al Hilal.

The president of the **KUWAIT** FA, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabbah, has dismissed claims that Diego Maradona had been asked to take charge of the national team, following the departure of Czech manager Milan Macala.

Tadamon top the table after four weeks.

In **LEBANON**, Al Ansar had opened a five-point gap over Shabab Al-Sahel at halfway.

New coach Ruud Krol's Wahda top the **UAE** League, eight points ahead of Al Wasl.

Al Jaish are on course for another double in **SYRIA**, leading the table by six points and still in the Cup.

Mohamed Chbaro

INDIA

Agony for Agragami

NEWCOMERS Tollygunge Agragami wasted a fine chance to reach the final stages of the Premier League contest. After leading Group A with only three games left, they lost 3-1 at home to Mohun Bagan, and 3-1 away to Churchill Brothers. Then, needing a win in their last match, they could only draw 1-1 away to JCT Mills in Margao, Goa.

Mohun Bagan, JCT and Churchill qualified from Group A; East Bengal, Cochin and Salgaocar from Group B.

There were 25 players in action from seven foreign countries – Brazil, Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Bermuda and the Maldives – but few of them made much impression.

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Crossword

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Mitre have kindly donated an Ultimax Fluo Flare, the official match ball of the English Football Association, as first prize for this month's crossword. The first correct entry selected at random after March 22 will win the ball. Five runners-up will each win a copy of the book *Football Moods*, a photographic essay of the game.
SEND YOUR ENTRY TO: APRIL CROSSWORD, *World Soccer*, King's Reach Tower, Stamford St, London SE1 9LS.

CLUES ACROSS

1 Successor to Guidolin as Vicenza coach (7)
7 Former England midfielder and long-time Forest player (5)
8 Lech Poznan and Poland striker recently snapped up by Hertha Berlin (5)
9 Ex-Valencia goalscorer now with Celta and recently elevated to Spain's national squad (7)
10 Ex-Zaragoza coach in charge at Celta (9)
15 Most-capped Argentinian currently coaching at San Lorenzo (7)
18 America midfielder who played in Mexico's 1998 World Cup side (5)
19 Lofty Togo striker now contracted to Borussia Dortmund (5)
20 Sheffield Wednesday's Czech goalkeeper, formerly with Newcastle (7)

CLUES DOWN

1 One-time FC Tirol wing-back now with Munich 1860 (5)
2 French midfielder at Sampdoria, formerly with Lens (6)
3 Norwegian champions of 1987 based at Mellos stadium (4)
4 Monchengladbach's Croatian defender, once at Inker Zapresic (6)
5 Hungarian forward in France with Metz (4)
6 Dutch keeper who returned to Lierse from Bordeaux (5)
11 Former Red Star midfielder of Atletico Madrid and Yugoslavia (6)
12 1999 Libertadores Cup qualifiers from Ecuador (6)
13 Swiss coach at White Hart Lane in 1998 (5)
14 Coach dismissed by Austria Wien last summer (5)
16 Keeper transferred from Hamburg to Freiburg in 1998 (4)
17 First name of Roma's ex-Partizan midfielder Tomic (4)

MARCH SOLUTION

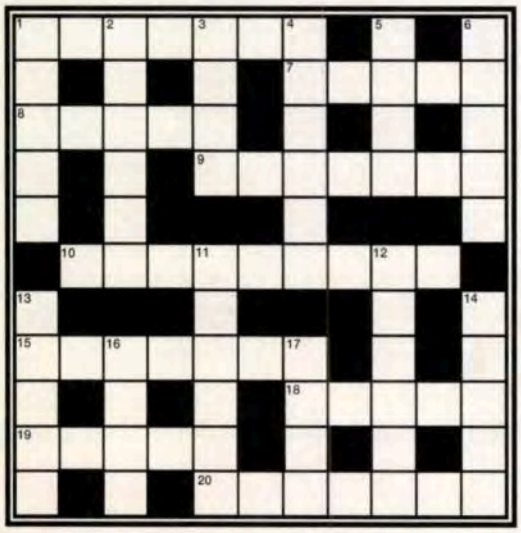
ACROSS: 1 Kiriakov, 6 Ajax, 7 Sparta, 9 Lardin, 10 Salas, 11 Blind, 14 Conteh, 16 Riseth, 17 Wome, 18 Vllaznia.
DOWN: 2 Ikpeba, 3 Kralj, 4 Vairelles, 5 Xavi, 8 Romantsev, 12 Nyathi, 13 Ohrel, 15 Okon.

FEBRUARY WINNERS

1st Prize: Davy Hill, South Yorkshire.
Runners-up: Tamas Kovacs, Miskolc, Hungary; Adam Coleman, Ickleton, Essex; Robert Allan, Gillingham; Clemente Pegoraro, Rome; David Sauce Martin, Madrid.

MARCH WINNERS

1st Prize: Michael Chin, Lincolnshire.
Runners-up: K O'Brien, Clydebank; Sebastian Escoda, Santa Fe, Argentina; Carol Cassar, San Gwann, Malta; Mark Davies, Pembrokeshire; Neville Watson, Dunedin, New Zealand.



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Diary January/February 1999

THURSDAY, JANUARY 14

ITALY: Former Olympic sprinter Pietro Mennea quits as director general of struggling Salernitana.
SOUTH AFRICA: Midfielder John Moeti is suspended by Orlando Pirates for refusing to play in a League match in a dispute over pay.
SPAIN: Atletico Madrid president Jesus Gil is released on bail from jail in Malaga, where he has been held on fraud charges.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 15

BELGIUM: Aime Anthuenis quits Genk to take over as coach of Anderlecht.
ITALY: Champions Juventus say that Carlo Ancelotti will take over as coach next season from Marcello Lippi…the League insists that no pay TV company will have exclusive rights to matches …Milan confirm the signing of Ukraine striker Andrii Shevchenko from Kyiv Dynamo for next season.
ROMANIA: Military prosecutors arrest Dinamo Bucharest president Petre Buduru on forgery charges.
SOMALIA: The country's return to international football after a decade's absence because of civil unrest is assured by a £650,000 grant from FIFA.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16

ITALY: Sampdoria lose defender Miguel Vieira Hugo for most of the rest of the season with an ankle injury.
RUSSIA: Lokomotiv St Petersburg manager Pavel Kuzenko, 29, and his girlfriend are murdered at their home in another business contract killing.
SPAIN: Santander appoint Paraguayan Gustavo Benitez as coach in succession to sacked Nando Yosu.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 17

ACTION: In Italy, Fiorentina return to the top after a Gabriel Batistuta hat-trick earns a 4-2 win over Cagliari.

MONDAY, JANUARY 18

PORTUGAL: Police say Vitoria Guimaraes fans assaulted a photographer and threatened reporters after Boavista beat their team 3-2.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19

BOTSWANA: National coach David Bright recalls veterans Itumeleng Duiker and Mmoloki Sechele for the Cosafa Castle Cup match against South Africa.
RUSSIA: Ex-referee Nikolai Latyshev claims Tofik Bakhramov, the linesman who validated England's controversial goal in the 1966 World Cup Final, was selected after giving a referees' committee member two jars of caviar.

Food for thought…Tofik Bakhramov

SOUTH AFRICA: National coach Trott Moloto names uncapped midfielder Godfrey Sapulai for the Nations Cup qualifier against Mauritius.
SPAIN: Barcelona defender Michael Reiziger is likely to be ruled out for two months because of knee surgery.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20

ACTION: World Cup holders France beat Morocco 1-0 in Marseille…Israel lose 1-0 at home to Norway in their Tri-Nations tournament.
ARGENTINA: Boca Juniors loan centre-back Fernando Ortiz to Mallorca B in the Spanish Second Division.
BELGIUM: Genk's Croatia striker Branko Strupar is voted Footballer of the Year.
CAMEROON: Frenchman Pierre Lechantre is appointed national boss.
ENGLAND: Middlesbrough say Italian striker Marco Branca has been forced to quit due to a knee injury. The player says he knows nothing about it.
GERMANY: Schalke's Czech midfielder Radek Latal is ruled out for the season after knee surgery.
ITALY: Milan goalkeeper Sebastiano Rossi is banned for five games for hitting Perugia's Cristian Bucci in the face.
REP IRELAND: The FAI announces plans to build a 45,000-seater national stadium on the outskirts of Dublin.
UNITED STATES: Goalkeeper Tony Meola, who has not played for the US since the 1994 World Cup, is recalled to the squad for a friendly against Bolivia.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21

ENGLAND: David Will is retained, by a unanimous vote, as the four home countries' FIFA vice-president.
GERMANY: The IFFHS statistics association votes Lev Yashin best

goalkeeper of the century. Other placings: 2 Dino Zoff, 3 Gordon Banks, 4 Ricardo Zamora, 5 Sepp Maier, 6 Frantisek Planicka, 7 Peter Schmeichel, 8 Peter Shilton, 9 Gyula Grosics, 10 Jean-Marie Pfaff.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 22

ACTION: Norway and Estonia draw 3-3 in a Tri Nations tie in Umm Al-Fahm, the first international to be held in an Arab town in Israel.
AUSTRIA: Otto Baric says he will quit LASK Linz at the end of February. Assistant Marinko Koljanin will take over.
SCOTLAND: Celtic settle their contract row with Marko Viduka.

MONDAY, JANUARY 25

FRANCE: Toulouse appoint Alain Giresse, sacked earlier this season by Paris Saint-Germain, as coach in place of Guy Lacombe.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 26

GERMANY: National coach Erich Ribbeck includes four uncapped players

African award...Milan's George Weah

in his squad for the two-game trip to the USA – midfielders Michael Ballack, Bern Schneider and Marco Reich, and forward Michael Preetz.
SPAIN: Barcelona's Nigeria defender Gbenga Okunowo is ruled out for six weeks after damaging knee ligaments.
SWITZERLAND: UEFA bans Sliema Wanderers' Czech forward Pavel Mraz until December 31 for attempting to bribe a Diosgyor player during an InterToto Cup tie last June.

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 27

ALGERIA: Meziane Ighil quits as national coach.
ROMANIA: Universitatea Craiova owner Stefan Ilinca is charged with forgery over illegal sales of state-subsidised grain.
UNITED STATES: DC United defender Carlos Llamosa and midfielder Brian Kamler are added to the US squad for the friendly against Germany.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 28

BULGARIA: Levski president Tomas Lafchis is fined £4,000 for falsely accusing players of champions Litex Lovech of taking drugs.
GERMANY: Public channels ARD and ZDF extend for a further five years their deal to screen national team matches.
SPAIN: Betis fine Denilson and goalkeeper Toni Prats for criticising coach Javier Clemente...La Coruna say Portugal defender Helder will be out for the rest of the season because of knee problems.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 29

CZECH REP: National coach Jozef Chovanec names uncapped Lokeren striker Jan Koller for the friendly against Belgium.
ITALY: Milan's Liberia striker George Weah is voted African Player of the Century ahead of Cameroon's Roger Milla and Ghana's Abedi Pele...Gianni Petrucci is elected new president of the Italian Olympic Committee (CONI).
SPAIN: Real Madrid announce the end-of-season signing of Liverpool and England's Steve McManaman.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 30

FRANCE: Cannes goalkeeper Sebastien Chabbert is taken to hospital after being struck by a missile thrown from the crowd in the match against Nice.
ITALY: Azeglio Vicini quits as president of the coaches' association in protest at the federation's failure to resolve the David Platt case.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 31

ACTION: In Spain, Barcelona take sole leadership of the League after defeating Santander 3-2.
GERMANY: Nine Dutch fans are arrested and three policemen hurt after rioting among Feyenoord supporters before a friendly against Bayer Leverkusen.
RUSSIA: Moscow Spartak beat Kyiv Dynamo 2-1 to win the CIS Cup.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 1

ARGENTINA: Police say a fan was shot dead in fighting between rival Huracan and Platense factions.
ENGLAND: John Hartson, now of Wimbledon, is banned for three games and fined by the FA for a training ground incident at his former club West Ham in which he kicked team-mate Eyal Berkovic in the face.
FRANCE: Marseille lose their appeal against the outcome of the League Cup penalty shoot-out defeat by Lens.
SPAIN: Zinedine Zidane is crowned FIFA Footballer of the Year at its annual gala in Barcelona. Ronaldo is second and Davor Suker third.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2

CYPRUS: Lierse midfielder David Brocken is named to make his Belgium debut in the tournament semi-final against the hosts in Limassol.
ENGLAND: Glenn Hoddle quits as national coach with an apology for the misunderstanding about his remarks regarding disabled people.
ITALY: David Platt quits as 'supervisor' of struggling Sampdoria after six matches.
UNITED STATES: Former national team captain John Harkes, currently on loan to Nottingham Forest, is transferred in MLS terms from DC United to New England Revolution.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 3

ACTION: In the Cyprus tournament semi-finals, Greece beat Finland 2-1 and the hosts lose 1-0 to Belgium... Argentina beat Venezuela on coach Marcelo Bielsa's debut.
BELGIUM: Jean-Marie Pfaff is sacked as coach of bottom club Ostende. Assistant Ronny Brackx takes over.
CROATIA: National coach Miroslav Blazevic calls up Perugia forward Milan Rapajic and Valladolid striker Alen Peternac for the Denmark game.
ENGLAND: Howard Wilkinson, the FA technical director, is appointed national team caretaker...Manchester United are revealed as the world's richest club in a survey by accountants Deloitte & Touche.
SPAIN: Real Madrid midfielder Fernando Redondo is ruled out for a further month by a knee injury...Atletico forward Kiko is out for most of the rest of the season after more ankle problems.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 4

BOSNIA: Dzemaludin Musovic quits as national coach in the wake of the previous week's 2-1 defeat by Malta.
CZECH REP: National coach Jozef Chovanec replaces Liverpool's Patrik Berger with Pavel Horvath of Slavia Prague for the friendly against Belgium in Brussels.
FRANCE: National coach Roger Lemerre recalls Bordeaux striker Lilian Laslandes to his squad to face England.
ITALY: Sampdoria re-appoint coach Luciano Spalletti – six weeks after sacking him...Vicenza appoint Edoardo Reja as coach in place of Franco Colomba.
PORTUGAL: Uncapped Benfica midfielder Hugo Leal is called up for the friendly against Holland.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5

ACTION: Greece beat Belgium 1-0 in the Final of the Cyprus international tournament; Cyprus beat Finland 2-1 after extra time in the third place play-off.

Explosive exit...Jose Luis Chilavert

ARGENTINA: Velez Sarsfield's Paraguay goalkeeper Jose Luis Chilavert needs hospital treatment for shock after a firecracker explodes next to him just before kick-off in a pre-season friendly against River Plate in Mendoza.
HONG KONG: Lee Wai-man, a 25-year-old winger, is acquitted of charges that he and four team-mates fixed a World Cup qualifier against Thailand.
ITALY: State-controlled RAI signs a four-year, £80million contract to televise national team matches.
NIGERIA: A FIFA inspection team says it is satisfied facilities will be adequate to host the World Youth Cup in April.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6

ACTION: The United States beat Germany 3-0 in Florida...in England, sub Ole Gunnar Solskjaer scores four goals in the last 12 minutes as Manchester United win 8-1 at Nottingham Forest...in France, Fabrizio Ravanelli scores twice as Marseille beat Bastia 3-1 to regain the League leadership.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7

ACTION: Real Madrid's stand-in skipper Raul scores a hat-trick to inspire a dramatic 3-2 win over Valladolid.
HUNGARY: Sports Minister Tamas Deutsch rejects FIFA's appeal to reinstate

the federation executive, who have been suspended over allegations of financial mismanagement.
ITALY: Marcello Lippi quits as coach of Juventus.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8

ARGENTINA: The players' union votes to strike in support of a demand for the lifting of an indefinite court suspension of lower division games because of crowd trouble.
BRAZIL: Atletico Mineiro lose their third coach of the year as Ricardo Drubsky quits in anger at the club's failure to fine striker Valdir for a training ground row.
BULGARIA: Veteran striker Hristo Stoichkov is recalled to the national squad for a four-team tournament in Hong Kong.
FRANCE: Bordeaux striker Sylvain Wiltord is called into the squad for the friendly against England to replace injured club-mate Lilian Laslandes.
GREECE: Norway midfielder Erik Mykland denies having bitten an opponent's ear after being sent off

Biting question...Erik Mykland

while playing for Panathinaikos against Paniliakos.
ITALY: Ilario Castagner quits as coach of Perugia in protest at continual interference from president Luciano Gaucci...Juventus say Carlo Ancelotti, who was to have succeeded Marcello Lippi at the season's end, will take over as coach immediately.
IVORY COAST: The CAF executive drops Zimbabwe as host to the 2000 African Nations Cup finals.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9

ACTION: Belgium lose 1-0 at home to Czech Republic, with Belgium-based debutant Jan Koller scoring the winner... Colombia and Germany draw 3-3 in Miami.
CZECH REP: Sparta Prague are put up for sale by their owners, the Slovak steelmakers VSZ Holding.
GREECE: PAOK Salonika appoint ex-Holland star Arie Haan as coach in succession to dismissed Angelos Anastassiadis.
ROMANIA: Steaua veteran Ilie Dumitrescu announces his retirement.
SPAIN: The Madrid regional government begins legal action against Atletico Madrid for failing to prevent fans displaying Nazi symbols at matches... players at Third Division Cordoba go on strike in protest at not having been paid for two months.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10

ACTION: France win at Wembley for the first time, beating England 2-0...in the Euro 2000 qualifiers, Malta lose 3-0 at home to Yugoslavia while Cyprus win 4-0 at home to San Marino.
BOSNIA: Faruk Hadzibegic is appointed new national coach in place of Dzemaludin Musovic.
CHINA: Scotland World Cup forward Darren Jackson turns down a move to Chinese champions Dalian Wanda from Celtic because he does not like the food.
ENGLAND: Officials of Europe's top leagues propose a Europe-wide transfer window and a common European calendar for international fixtures, and agree on a minimum number of players under 21 in each club's senior squad.
ITALY: Roma extend coach Zdenek Zeman's contract by a year...veteran Yugoslav coach Vujadin Boskov is appointed new boss of Perugia...Nike drops sponsorship of the national team.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11

FRANCE: Veteran France sweeper Franck Sauzee quits Montpellier to join Hibernian on an 18-month contract.
GERMANY: Leverkusen forward Erik Meijer decides to quit at the season's end and sign a three-year deal with Liverpool.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12

ENGLAND: Three men charged with offences related to sabotaging floodlights at Charlton appear in court.
FRANCE: Daniel Nivel, the gendarme attacked by German hooligans in Lens during the World Cup, is presented with the French military medal.
SINGAPORE: The national League decides to become the first in Asia to legalise domestic betting in a bid to stifle the threat of match-fixing and corruption.
SPAIN: Real Madrid say they will become the third club in Europe with their own television channel when Real Madrid television (RMT) begins broadcasting on February 15.

Cleared by FIFA...Graham Kelly

SWITZERLAND: A FIFA investigation into the 'cash-for-votes' scandal which brought about the downfall of Keith Wiseman and Graham Kelly clears the English FA of any "incorrect or improper actions".

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 13

ACTION: In France, Sylvain Wiltord scores twice as Bordeaux beat Bastia 2-0 to maintain pressure on Marseille at the top.
ENGLAND: The FA orders a replay of the Arsenal v Sheffield United FA Cup-tie at the London club's suggestion. Arsenal won the game 2-1 but their second goal stemmed from a throw-in that should have given possession back to United, following an injury to one of their players.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14

ACTION: In Italy, Lazio go top for the first time in 24 seasons, despite being held 0-0 at Cagliari...in Spain, Barcelona romp to a 3-0 win over Real Madrid, with Luis Enrique scoring two headers.
AUSTRIA: Canadian auto parts magnate Frank Stronach is elected president of the League after promising to invest more than £50m in the Austrian game.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15

ITALY: Empoli replace coach Mauro Sandreani with Corrado Orrico.
SPAIN: Arrigo Sacchi resigns as coach of Atletico Madrid.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16

GERMANY: Ghana striker Tony Yeboah extends his contract with Hamburg until 2000...Hamburg agree to sign Robert Kovac, the Bayer Leverkusen midfielder, at the season's end, as well as Wolfsburg striker Roy Prager and Iran international Vahid Hashemian.
PORTUGAL: Cup-holders Porto are knocked out by Second Division Torreense.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

CHILE: A 19-year-old Colo Colo fan dies in hospital a week after being beaten up by fans of Universidad de Chile.
ENGLAND: Kevin Keegan is appointed new manager of England, but only for the next four games.
FRANCE: Pay-television channel Canal Plus signs a multimedia marketing deal with five top clubs – Lyon, Monaco, Marseille, Lens and Paris Saint-Germain.
ITALY: Inter have three players sent off as they lose 2-0 at home to Parma in a Cup semi-final first leg.
SPAIN: Valladolid midfielder Eusebio Sacristan breaks a leg in training...Nigeria winger Finidi George extends his contract with Betis until 2004...Tenerife's Argentine defender Pablo Paz is ruled out for the rest of the season with a knee injury.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18

ITALY: The state prosecutor says he can find no evidence to bring charges over the alleged fixing of the Serie A match between Venezia and Bari.
SOUTH AFRICA: The federation reveals it has received confirmation that Nigeria, Ghana and Egypt will not maintain their rival bids to stage the 2006 World Cup.

Compiled by Keir Radnedge

OBITUARIES

CLAUDE BEZ, former Bordeaux president, has died of heart failure, aged 58. Bez, who ran the club from 1978 to 1990, had been due to face trial in February on fraud charges arising from alleged misuse of local government grants to the club. Under Bez, Bordeaux became the top French club of the 1980s, winning two League titles and two French Cups.

LUC BORRELLI, reserve goalkeeper with Lyon, has died in a car crash, aged 33. Marseille-born Borrelli joined Lyon from Second Division Caen last year. He previously played for Paris Saint-Germain and Toulon.

NIKOLAI LATYSHEV, the 1962 World Cup Final referee, has died in Moscow, aged 85. He first came to international attention during Moscow Dynamo's controversial tour of Britain in the winter of 1945-46. Latyshev retired to become a senior refereeing official.

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World Service

Your complete guide to the month's stats and facts

INTERNATIONALS

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ALBANIA – Macedonia (Feb 10, 2-0)
ALGERIA – Tunisia (Jan 24, 0-1)
ANGOLA – Gabon (Jan 24, 3-1)
ARGENTINA – Venezuela (Feb 3, 2-0), Mexico (Feb 10, 1-0)
BELARUS – Israel (Feb 9, 1-2)
BELGIUM – Cyprus (Feb 3, 1-0), Greece (Feb 5, 0-1), Czech Rep (Feb 9, 0-1)
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TUNISIA – Algeria (Jan 24, 1-0), Sweden (Feb 10, 0-1)
UGANDA – Liberia (Jan 24, 0-2)
UNITED STATES – Bolivia (Jan 24, 0-0), Germany (Feb 6, 3-0)
VENEZUELA – Denmark (Jan 27, 1-1), Argentina (Feb 3, 0-2)
YUGOSLAVIA – Malta (Feb 10, 3-0)
ZAMBIA – Madagascar (Jan 24, 2-1)

Sunday, January 10

Dakar – friendly
Senegal 1 (Tafsir Saliou Ngom 85)
Guinea 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,000

Wednesday, January 13

Dakar – friendly
Senegal 1 (Adama Gueye 30)
Guinea 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,000

Monday, January 18

Tel Aviv, Ramat Gan – Tri-Nations Tournament
Israel 7 (Nimny pen 17, Tikvah 29, R Harazi 32, 37, Mizrahi 40, Shitrit 80, Telasnikov 83)
Estonia 0
HT: 5-0. **Att:** 1,500. **Ref:** Duhamel (Fra)
Israel: Davidowitz (Elimelech 46) – A Harazi, Ben Shimon (Gershon 46), Shelah (Benado 46), Grayeb (Keissy 46) – Badir (Zitouni 46), Tikvah, Nimny (Telasnikov 46), Tal – Mizrahi (Sevilia 46), R Harazi (Shitrit 46).
Estonia: Tohver – Kirs (Saviauk 78), Lemsalu, Hohlov-Simson (Piiroja 80), U Rooba (Meet 46) – Kristal (Svets 71), Reim, Smirnov (Alonen 46), Terekhov – Oper, Zelinski (Viikmae 46).

Lome – friendly
Togo 1
Burkina Faso 2
Att: 6,000

Wednesday, January 20

Marseille – friendly
France 1 (Djorkaeff 47)
Morocco 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 55,000
France: Barthez – Thuram, Blanc (Leboeuf 46), Desailly, Candela – Deschamps (Petit 46), Boghossian, Zidane (Anelka 67), Djorkaeff – Dugarry (Pires 46), Maurice.
Morocco: Benzekri – Saber, Rossi (Abrami 46), Naybet, Hadrioui, Chiba, Chippo (Sellami 78), Lakhlej, Hadji, Hadda (Roki 82), Bassir.

Tel Aviv – Tri-Nations Tournament
Israel 0
Norway 1 (Skammelsrud pen 11)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,500
Israel: Davidowitz – A Harazi, Ben Shimon, Benado, Shelah (A Mizrahi 37), Graieb – Badir (Zitouni 77), A Tikvah (Sevilia 53), Nimny, Tal – R Harazi (Shitrit 70).
Norway: Baardsen (Olsen 46) – Basma, Bragstad, Hoftun, Bergdolmo – Ostenstad (Bakke 80), Strand (Berg Hestad 53), Skammelsrud, Svindal Larsen, Strandli (J Flo 90) – Carew.

Friday, January 22

Umm Al-Fahm, Israel – Tri-Nations Tournament
Norway 3 (Solbakken 20, Strand 55, Carew 71)
Estonia 3 (Reim pen 74, Zelinski 80, 88)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Haim Yakov
Norway: Grodas – Lundekvam (Basma 46), Bragstad, Hoftun, Bergdolmo (Tran 76) – Ostenstad (Berg Hestad 55), Strand (Skammelsrud 57), Solbakken, Svindal Larsen, Strandli (J Flo 46) – Carew.
Estonia: Thover – Kirs, Hohlov-Simson (U Rooba 41), Lemsalu, Saviauk – Kristal (Meet 90), Reim, Alonen (Smirnov 82), Terekhov (Svets 74) – Vikmae (Zelinski 74), Oper.

Saturday, January 23

Cali – friendly
Colombia 1 (Asprilla 77)
Denmark 1 (Fredgaard 11)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 15,000

Asmara – African Nations Cup qual
Eritrea 0
Cameroon 0
Att: 5,000

Curepipe – African Nations Cup qual
Mauritius 1 (Periatambee 55)
South Africa 1 (Masinga 44)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,385

Abeokuta – African Nations Cup qual
Nigeria 2 (Lawal 38, George 70)
Burundi 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 7,000

Dakar – African Nations Cup qual
Senegal 1 (Keita 31)
Burkina Faso 1 (Campo 54)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 40,000

Sunday, January 24

Santa Cruz – friendly
Bolivia 0
United States 0
Att: 24,000. **Ref:** Panaguia (Bol)
Bolivia: Fernandez — S Castillo, Jiguchi, Arana, Alvarez – Tufino, Justiniano (Loayza 74), R Gutierrez (Liendo 46), Ramos (Galindo 68) – Gottardi (B Suarez 46), L Gutierrez (R Suarez 68).
US: Meola – Fraser, Agoos, Pope (Brown 64) – Lewis (Baba 75), Armas, Retna, Jones, Kirovski – McBride, Moore (Lassiter 68).

Algiers – African Nations Cup qual
Algeria 0
Tunisia 1 (Faouzi Rouissi 44)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 50,000

Luanda – African Nations Cup qual
Angola 3 (Akwa 7, 52, 87)
Gabon 1 (Martin 34)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 15,000

Kinshasa – African Nations Cup qual
DR Congo 2 (Kanyengele 15, 85)
Kenya 1 (Otoch 66)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 75,000

Accra – African Nations Cup qual
Ghana 1 (Akunnor 54)
Mozambique 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000

Conakry – African Nations Cup qual
Guinea 1 (Oulare 30)
Morocco 1 (Hadji 46)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 18,000

Abidjan – African Nations Cup qual
Ivory Coast 3 (Diallo 1, 90, Diomande 32)
Namibia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 15,000

Monrovia – African Nations Cup qual
Liberia 2 (Roberts 20, Jebrow 38)
Uganda 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 11,000

Antananarivo – African Nations Cup qual
Madagascar 1 (Rasoanaivo 65)
Zambia 2 (Kilembe 85, Milanzy 87)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 4,000

Wednesday, January 27

Valletta – friendly
Malta 2 (Carabott 45, Busuttil 85)
Bosnia 1 (Salihamidzic 29)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 2,500
Malta: Barry – Turner, Buhagiar (Cutajar), S Vella (Said 46), Chetcuti, Buttigieg, Busuttil (Bencini), Saliba, Carabott, Brincat (D Camilleri), Agius.
Bosnia: Pejkovic* – Kapetanovic (Ihtijarevic), Jasman, Konjic, Varesanovic, Rizvic, Zaimovic, Halilovic, Repuh, Salihamidzic, Hasancic (Dedic 66). **Sent off: 65mins.*

San Jose – friendly
Costa Rica 0
Ecuador 0
Att: 15,000
Costa Rica: Lonnis – J Drummond, Cordero, Marin, Alfaro (Berry 78), Campos, Centeno, Murillo (Lopez 74), Wanchope, Myers, Sequeira (G Drummond 46).
Ecuador: Cevallos – De la Cruz, Poroso, Caicedo, Ayovi, Montano, Carabali, Reascos (Tenorio 79), Candelario (Fernandez 46), Hurtado, Correa (Capurro 76).

Maracaibo – friendly
Venezuela 1 (Rey 65)
Denmark 1 (Sand 55)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Oscar Ruiz (Col)
Venezuela: Vigas – Alvarez, Rojas, McIntosh, Tortolero, Rey, Vera (Arango 61), Tuno, Urdaneta, Martinez, Casseres.
Denmark: J Nielsen – Colding, Henruksen, Jensen, P Nielsen – Daugaard (Hermansen 75), Steen Nielsen, Fredgaard (Bagger 83), Poulsen (Michaelsen 24), Frederiken, Sand.
Sent off: P Nielsen 90mins.

Sunday, January 31

Guayaquil – friendly
Ecuador 1 (Hurtado 77)
Denmark 1 (Daugar 88)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,000

Wednesday, February 3

Larnaca – Cyprus tournament semi-final
Greece 2 (Nikolaidis pen 67, Georgatos 88)
Finland 1 (Kaijasilta 63)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,000
Greece: Atmatzidis – Mavrogenidis, Fissas (P Konstantinidis 70), Anatolakis, Goumas – Poursanidis, Markos (Giannakopoulos 62), Georgatos, Zikos – Limberopoulos (S Konstantinidis 85), Nikolaidis.
Finland: Viander – Karjalainen (T Gronlund), Nylund, Rasanen (Salli 87), Saastornoinen – M Tuomela, Ylonen, Hiukka (Kaijasilta 46), Ilola – Kottila, Priha (Pohja 69).

Larnaca – Cyprus tournament semi-final
Cyprus 0
Belgium 1 (M Mpenza 75)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,000
Cyprus: Panayitou – Ioakim, Pittas, Theodorou (Aristocleous 70), Charalambous, Melanargitis (Christodoulou 77), Constandinou, Spoljaric, Gogic (Okkas 78), Malekos, Christodoulu.
Belgium: Gaspercic – De Brul, Staelens (Goor 21), Van Meir, Van Kerckhoven, Clement, Janssens, Brocken, M Mpenza, Walem, E Mpenza.

Guatemala City – friendly
Guatemala 0
Ecuador 0
Att: 10,000. **Ref:** Castillo (Gua)
Guatemala: Estrada – Ruano, Leon, Molina, Jimenez – Caseres, Rodas (Ponsiano), Giron, Garcia – Valencia (Rojas), Ruiz.
Ecuador: Cevallos – Montana, Poroso, Caicedo, Ayovi – Valencia, Candelario, Caravali, Ferri – Sanchez, E Hurtado.

Maracaibo – friendly
Venezuela 0
Argentina 2 (Samuel 55, Gallardo 67)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Paneso (Col)
Venezuela: Vigas – McIntosh, Alvarez, Rey, Rojas, Duno, Tortolero, Hernandez (Briceno 75), Urdaneta, Martinez (Vera 61), Caseres.
Argentina: Burgos – Ibarra (Husain 23), Berizzo, Samuel, Sorin, Cagna, Astrada, Bassedas, Gallardo, Barros Schelotto (Fernandez 88), Palermo.

Valletta – friendly
Malta 0
Poland 1 (Klos 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 300. **Ref:** Trentalange (Ita)
Malta: Barry – Said, Turner, Spiteri (Bencini 73), Chetcuti (Buhagiar 84), Buttigieg, Busuttil (Cutajar 46; Sultana 88), Saliba (Sixsmith 79), Carabott, Camilleri, Agius (Mifsud 37).
Poland: Matysek (Sidorczuk 46) – Klos, Lapinski, Bak (Wegrzyn 46), Siadaczka, Hajto (Czereszewski 46), Michalski (K Nowak 46), Brzeczek (Czerwiec 81), Majak (P Swierczewski 46), Kowalczyk (Reiss 72), Trzeciak (Zurawski 82).

Friday, February 5

Nicosia – Cyprus tournament Final
Greece 1 (Giannakopoulos 90)
Belgium 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,000
Greece: Eleftheropoulos – P Konstantinidis (Mavroyenidis 67), Katsiambis, Antzas, Kalitzakis, Poursanidis, Giannakopoulos, Zikos (Georgatos 67), Liolidis (Nikolaidis 67), K Konstantinidis, S Konstantinidis (Limberopoulos 80).
Belgium: De Vlieger – Kimoni, De Brul, Van Meir, Oyen (Janssens 63), De Boeck, Staelens, Deflandre, Goor, De Bilde (E Mpenza 63), Pierre (M Mpenza 63).

Paralimni – Cyprus tournament third place play-off
Cyprus 2 (Karjalainen og 39, Papavassiliou 101)
Finland 1 (Pohja 6) (aet)
HT: 1-1. **90min:** 1-1. **Att:** 1,000
Cyprus: Foukkaris – Shimitras, Panayiotou, Sophocleous (Papavassiliou 46), Misos, Nicolaou (Kyriakou 80), Aristocleous, Chrysostomou (Iosifides 60),Okkas, Ioannou, Sotiriou (Demetriou 58).
Finland: Viander – Ylonen, Tuomela, Staastarnoinen, Karjalainen, Kottila (Grunlund 60), Kaijasilta, Ilola, Pohja (Hiukka 75), Rasanen (Priha 73), Nylund (Tervonen 95).

Saturday, February 6

Jacksonville, Florida – friendly
United States 3 (Kirovski 16, Sanneh 24, Reyna 26)
Germany 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Alcala (Mex)
USA: Meola – Agoos, Fraser, Brown – Lewis (Hejduk 77), Armas, Reyna, Sanneh, Kirovski (Moore 86) – Jones (Lassiter 86), McBride.
Germany: Kahn – Matthaus, Babbel, Rehmer, Ricken, Jeremies, Ramelow (Nerlinger 46), Zickler (Bode 46), Moller, Preetz, Marschall.

Muscat – Oman tournament
Switzerland 2 (Hodel 8, Comisetti 18)
Slovenia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 250. **Ref:** Baboud (Oman)
Switzerland: Hilfiker – Henchoz – Hodel, Zwyssig – Wicky, J Vogel, Sforza (Buhlmann 56), Di Jorio – Muller, Chapuisat (Rey 72), Comisetti (Chassot 90).
Slovenia: Simeunovic – Galic (Bulajic 68) – Milanic, Knavs – Dominko (M Gasjer 46), Ceh (Cipot 74), Pavlin, Rudonja – Zahovic, Osterc, Udovic (Acimovic 46).

Sunday, February 7

Maseru – Cosafa Castle Cup
Lesotho 1 (Ntsonyana 11)
Namibia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Sesikwe (Bot)
Lesotho: Khoboli – Makara, Hlojeng, Ntsonyana – Mahlakajoe, Ramafole (Shale 63), Maseela, Seema, Pheko – Mphongoa, Mosothoan (Potse 63).
Namibia: Kanalelo – Tjihero, Goagoseb, Tom, Ouseb – Nauseb, Benjamin,Samaraia (Auchumeb 46), Goraseb (Bostander 75) – Khob, Schmidt (Hindjou 34).

Monday, February 8

Ljubljana – friendly
Slovenia 7 (Osterc 8, 72, 82, 89, Gajser 26, Zahovic 87, Udovic 90)
Oman 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 1,500

Tuesday, February 9

Brussels – friendly
Belgium 0
Czech Republic 1 (Koller 73)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Wegereel
Belgium: De Vlieger – De Brul (Kimoni 57), Vidovic, De Boeck, Goor, Delbroek, Staelens, Genaux (Tanghe 77), E Mpenza (De Bilde 46), Walem, Pierre.
Czech Rep: Smicek – Rada, Suchoparek, Hasek, Horvath, Hornak (Vonasek 71), Nemec (Novotny 71), Poborsky (Vlcek 71), Koller, Smicer (Galasek 84), Baranek (Vagner 90).

Miami, Orange Bowl – friendly
Colombia 3 (Asprilla 26, pen 68, I Cordoba 80)
Germany 3 (Preetz 33, 56, Bode 74)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 14,563. **Ref:** Hall (USA)
Colombia: O Cordoba – I Cordoba, Maziri, Bermudez, Lemus, Serna, Betancourt (Preciado 46), Morantes (Salcedo 80), Bolanos (Yepes 46), Asprilla, Zambrano (Congo 60). *Sent off: Lemus 44mins.*
Germany: Kahn (Lehman 46) – Matthaus, Babbel, Worns, Rehmer, Moller, Neuville (Zickler 74), Jeremies (Nerlinger 46), Bode, Reich (Ricken 78), Preetz.

Haifa – friendly
Israel 2 (Nimny 20, 51)
Belarus 1 (Baranov 28)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 7,500. **Ref:** Coprian (Rom)
Israel: Davidovitz (Sheisinger 46) – Ben Shimon (Tal 46), Benado, Shelah-Graieb (Keissi 83), A Harazi, Berkowitz (Telasnikov 86), Badir, Nimny (Zeitouni 70) – Revivo (Shitrit 88), R Harazi (Sevilia 46).
Belarus: Chantolossov (Satsunkevich 46) – Yakhimovich, Ostrovsky, Lavrik, Terlovsky (Karpichenko 46) – Gurenko, Khatchka (Barachov 46), Guerachenko (Kolchai 56), Romachenko – Makovsky (Mazur 71), Baranov.

Wednesday, February 10

Nicosia – Euro 2000 qual
Cyprus 4 (Melanarkitis 18, Constantinou 32, 45, Christodoulou 88)
San Marino 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 3,000
Cyprus: Panayiotou – Theodotou, Christodoulou, Ioachim, Charalambous, Pittas, Melanarkitis, Spoljaric, Gogic (Ioannou 80), Constantinou (Okkas 80), Malekkos (Aristocleous 89).
San Marino: F Gasperoni – Gennari, Marani (Vanucci 84), Gobbi, Vittorio, Guerra, Zonzini, Della Vale (Manzaroli 70), Ugolini (Bacciocchi 46), Luciano Mularoni, Selva.

GROUP 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cyprus	4	3	0	1	8	5	9
Austria	3	2	1	0	8	2	7
Israel	3	1	1	1	7	3	4
Spain	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
San Marino	4	0	0	4	1	14	0

Valletta – Euro 2000 qual
Malta 0
Yugoslavia 3 (Nadj 22, 55, Milosevic 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 7,000. **Ref:** Garibian (Fra)
Malta: Barry – Said, Turner, Spiteri, D Camilleri (Sixsmith 73), Buttigieg, Busuttil, Saliba, Carabott, Nwoko (Cutajar 82), Agius (Bencini 59).
Yugoslavia: Kralj – Mirkovic, Djorovic, Jokanovic, Djukic, Mihajlovic, Stankovic (Tomic 75), Nadj, Stankovic (Grozdic 87), Mijatovic, Kovacevic (Milosevic 70).

GROUP 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rep Ireland	3	2	0	1	7	1	6
Macedonia	3	2	0	1	8	4	6
Yugoslavia	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Croatia	3	2	0	1	7	5	6
Malta	5	0	0	5	2	18	0

Tirana – friendly
Albania 2 (R Vata 48, Bogdani 90)
Macedonia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Borovilos (Gre)
Albania: Strakosha (Beqaj 82) – Pinari, Dalipi (Markoci 74), Xhumba, R Vata, Jupi (Dabulla 65), Haxhi, Bushi, Kola (Bogdani 80), Halili (Muka 46), Tare.
Macedonia: Milosevski (Jovcev 80) – Nikolvski (Gerasinovski 80), Stokovski (Lazarevski 46), Sedlovski, Babunski (Gosev 46), Stavrevski, Trajcov (Dzokic74), Stojanovski, Curic, Trenevski (Saciri 46), Veselinovski.

Split – friendly
Croatia 0
Denmark 1 (Sand 45)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Veissiere (Fra)
Croatia: Mrmic (Pletikosa 46) – Stanic (Saric 46), Jarni (Cvitanovic 76), Simic (Tokic 46), Stimac, Milinovic, Asanovic (Rapajic 46), Soldo, Suker, Boban, Vlaovic (Peternac 46).
Denmark: Schmeichel – Colding, Henriksen, Hogh, Heintze, Helveg, A Nielsen, Thomsen (Steen Nielsen 34), Molnar (Fredriksen 67), Jorgensen (Gravesen 55), Sand.

Lima – friendly
Peru 1 (Mendoza 38)
Ecuador 2 (E Hurtado 67, 76)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 10,000
Peru: Del Mar, Soto, Salazer, Rebosio, Hidalgo (Gomez 78), Chacon, Bernalas, Pereda (Torres 78), Palacios, Pizarro, Mendoza.
Ecuador: Javallos, De la Cruz, Montano, Poroso, I Hurtado, Ayovi (Valencia 70), Carcelan, Tenorio (Calle 75), Corrse (Caldonado 59), Sanchez (Ferri 46), E Hurtado.

Wembley – friendly
England 0
France 2 (Anelka 69, 76)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 74,111. **Ref:** Krug (Ger)
England: Seaman (Martyn 46) – Dixon (R Ferdinand 72), Adams, Keown (Scholes 86), Le Saux – Beckham, Ince, Redknapp (Wilcox 86), Anderton – Owen (Cole 64), Shearer.
France: Barthez – Thuram, Desailly, Blanc (Leboeuf 46), Lizarazu – Deschamps (Candela 90), Petit, Zidane, Pires (Dugarry 46) – Djorkaeff (Vieira 84), Anelka (Wiltord 84).

Pisa – friendly
Italy 0
Norway 0
Att: 22,500. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Italy: Peruzzi – Panucci (Torricelli 46), Cannavaro, Nesta, Maldini – D Baggio (Cois 46), Albertini, Di Francesco, Zambrotta (Totti 62) – R Baggio (Chiesa 81), Delvecchio.
Norway: Myhre – Heggem, Johnsen, Bragstad, Bergdolomo – Rudi, Mykland, Solbakken (Strand 68), Rekdal, H Flo (Riseth 76) – Solskjaer (Carew 90).

Muscat – Oman tournament
Oman 1 (M Moubarak 89)
Switzerland 2 (Yakin 9, Comisetti 33)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 200. **Ref:** Abdulaziz (Oman)

Valletta – friendly
Poland 1 (Kowalczyk 1)
Finland 1 (Johansson 20)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Sammit (Mlt)
Poland: Sidorczuk (Wyparlo 46) – Bak, Zielinski (Michalski 46), Lapinski, Siadaczka (Swierczewski 58), Brzeczek, Wegrzyn, Hajto (Klos 70), Iwan, Kowalczyk, Trzeciak.
Finland: Niemi (Jaskelainen 46) – Reini (Lehkosuo 52), Tuomela, Hyppia, Ylonen, Ilola, Valakari, Riihilahti, Kaijasilta, Kolkka, Johansson.

Paris, Parc des Princes – friendly
Portugal 0
Holland 0
Att: 27,443. **Ref:** Colombo (Fra)
Portugal: Vitor Baia – Secretario, Paulo Madeira, Fernando Couto (Beto 63), Dimas – Paulo Bento, Paulinho Santos (Litos 89), Rui Costa (Leal 65), Luis Figo (Nuno Gomes 76) – Joao Pinto (Sergio Conceicao 65), Sa Pinto (Pauleta 90).
Holland: Van der Sar – Van Wonderen, Cocu, Stam (Van Gastel 46), F De Boer, Boussatta (Van Hintum 88), Davids, R De Boer (Seedorf 46), Van Vossen (Zenden 75), Bergkamp (Van Nistelrooy 75), Kluivert (Mols 58).

Dublin – friendly
Rep Ireland 2 (Irwin pen 39, Connolly 73)
Paraguay 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 27,600. **Ref:** Orrason (Ice)
Rep Ireland: Given (A Kelly 67) – Irwin, Harte (Babb 71), Cunningham, Breen, Roy Keane, McAteer (McLoughlin 81), Kinsella (Carsley 67), Quinn (Cascarino 69), Robbie Keane (Connolly 67), Duff.
Paraguay: Tavarelli – Valdez, Rolon, Ortiz, Caniza, Acosta, Aguilera, Paredes, Caballero (Britez 71), Franco (Esquivel 80), Roman (Peralta 58).

Tunis – friendly
Tunisia 0
Sweden 1 (Alexandersson 77)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Abdelkim
Tunisia: El Ouer (Salhi 46) – Jaidi, S Trabelsi (H Trabelsi 46), Badra (M Trabelsi 46) – Bouazizi, Ghodbane, Kanzari, Chihi (Toujani 46), Azaeiz – F Roussi (Mhadhbi 46).
Sweden: Hedman (Kihlstedt 46) – R Nilsson, P Andersson, Bjorklund, Lucic (Kamark 65) – Alexandersson, D Andersson, A Andersson (Jonsson 84), Blomqvist – Larsson (Pettersson 46), K Andersson.

Los Angeles, Coliseum – friendly
Mexico 0
Argentina 1 (Sorin 67)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 91,585. **Ref:** Grady (USA)
Mexico: Campos – Pardo, Almaguer, Davino, Zepeda, Villa (Carmona 46), Suarez, Cabrera (Abundis 46), Palencia, Blanco, Hernandez.
Argentina: Burgos – Husain, Berizzo, Samuel, Sorin, Astrada, Cagna, Gallardo (San Esteban 90), Bassedas (Mendez 82), Barros Schelloto, Palermo.

Kingston – friendly
Jamaica 1 (Burton 82)
Costa Rica 1 (Drummond 35)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 16,000
Jamaica: Lawrence – Powell (Fuller 57), Waugh, Dawes, D Powell (Lowe 46), Goodison, Gardner, Whitmore (Malcolm 70), Williams (Simpson 46), Boyd (Burton 46), Hall.
Costa Rica: Lonnis – J Drummond, Cordero (Alfaro 86), Rowe, Berry (Murillo 75), Centeno, Fonseca (Diach 65), Campos, Meyer, Solis, G Drummond.

Tuesday, February 16

Hong Kong – Carlsberg Cup
Hong Kong Lge XI 0
Mexico 0
Mexico won 4-3 on pens

Hong Kong – Carlsberg Cup
Egypt 3 (H Hassan 11, 31, Imam 81)
Bulgaria 1 (Iovov 88)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 15,000
Egypt: El Sayed – I Hassan, Youssef, H Hassan, El Sabry, Rayan, Khashba, Imam, A Hassan, El Aziz, El Zaher Elsaka.
Bulgaria: Zdravkov – Kishishev, Zagorcic, Naidenov, Stoyanov, Gruev, Stoichkov, Iovov, Batchev, Petkov, Yonkov.

Wednesday, February 17

Guatemala City – friendly
Guatemala 1 (Machon pen 90)
Chile 1 (Neira 46)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 12,000

Thursday, February 18

Guayaquil – friendly
Ecuador 1 (Chala 68)
Peru 2 (Pizarro 28, Mendoza 48)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Zambrano (Ecu)
Ecuador: Cevallos – Poroso, Calle (Valencia), Montano, Borja, Ayovi, Tenorio, Carabali (Maldonado), Aguinaga, E Hurtado, Asencio (Chala).
Peru: Flores – Jorge Soto, Reynoso, Gomez, Rebosio, Pereda, Bernales, Torres, Palacios, Pizarro, Mendoza (Waldir).

Friday, February 19

Hong Kong – Carlsberg Cup Final
Mexico 3 (Marquez 34, Abundis 43, Hernandez pen 88)
Egypt 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 35,000
Mexico: Rios – Suarez, Cabrera, Zepeda, Blanco, Pardo, Hernandez, Carmona, Chavez, Marquez, Abundis.
Egypt: El Sayed – I Hassan, Youssef, H Hassan, El Sabry, Rayan, Khashba, Diab, A Hassan, El Aziza, El Zaher Elsaka.

Hong Kong – Carlsberg Cup third place play-off
Hong Kong Lge XI 0
Bulgaria 3 (Stoichkov 5, Iovov 23, 52)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 35,000

SOUTH AMERICAN U-20 CHAM'SHIP

Group A

in Mar del Plata, Argentina
Jan 5-16: Chile 2 Ecuador 0; Argentina 4 Venezuela 1; Peru 2 Venezuela 1; Argentina 2 Ecuador 0; Chile 6 Venezuela 0; Argentina 2 Peru 0; Peru 2 Ecuador 1; Argentina 4 Chile 0; Chile 4 Peru 0; Venezuela 3 Ecuador 2.

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Argentina	4	4	0	0	12	1	12
Chile	4	3	0	1	12	4	9
Peru	4	2	0	2	4	8	6
Venezuela	4	1	0	3	5	14	3
Ecuador	4	0	0	4	3	9	0

Argentina, Chile and Peru qualified for final round

Group B

in Tandil, Argentina
Jan 6-14: Uruguay 1 Colombia 0; Brazil 4 Bolivia 0; Paraguay 2 Bolivia 1; Brazil 3 Colombia 1; Uruguay 7 Bolivia 1; Paraguay 1 Brazil 1; Paraguay 2 Uruguay 0; Colombia 2 Bolivia 2; Paraguay 2 Colombia 1; Brazil 0 Uruguay 0.

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paraguay	4	3	1	0	7	3	10
Brazil	4	2	2	0	8	2	8
Uruguay	4	2	1	1	8	3	7
Colombia	4	0	1	3	4	8	1
Bolivia	4	0	1	3	4	15	1

Paraguay, Brazil and Uruguay qualified for final round

Final round

Jan 17: Uruguay 1 Argentina 0; Peru 2 Paraguay 1; Chile 3 Brazil 2.

Jan 19: Brazil 3 Paraguay 1; Uruguay 2 Chile 1; Argentina 5 Peru 0.

Jan 21: Paraguay 3 Chile 2; Uruguay 0 Peru 0; Argentina 2 Brazil 1.

Jan 23: Brazil 6 Peru 0; Argentina 1 Chile 0; Paraguay 1 Uruguay 0.

Jan 25: Peru 2 Chile 2; Argentina 1 Paraguay 0; Uruguay 2 Brazil 2.

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Argentina	5	4	0	1	9	2	12
Uruguay	5	2	2	1	5	4	8
Brazil	5	2	1	2	14	8	7
Paraguay	5	2	0	3	6	8	6
Peru	5	1	2	2	4	14	5
Chile	5	1	1	3	8	10	4

Top four qualified for the World Youth Cup in Nigeria in April

OTHER MATCHES

Jan 8: (Bizerte) Tunisia 1 (Maher Kazari 80), Anderlecht 0.
Feb 6: (Jacksonville) United States U-23 0 Germany U-23 1 (Bugara).
Feb 9: (Derby) England U-21 2 (Bowyer 54, Upson 62), France U-21 1 (Christanual 21).
Att: 32,865. Ref: L Irvine (Ire).

(Bray) Rep Ireland B 4 FAI National Lge 3; (Wrexham) Wales B 1 (Williams 72), Northern Ireland B 0.
Att:1,270. Ref: Gallagher.

(Valletta, Euro U-21 Championship, Gp 8) Malta 1 (A Zahra 4) Yugoslavia 5 (Drulic 21,40, 63, N Dzodic 52, M Pantelic 57).

EUROPE

BELGIUM

Wednesday, January 27

Standard 2 (E Mpenza 20, Blay 86)
Genk 4 (Strupar 36, 48, T Gudjonsson 51, Oulare 65) Att: 20,000

Friday, January 29

Club Brugge 2 (De Brul 69, 80)
Anderlecht 0 Att: 26,000

Saturday, January 30

Beveren 1 (Torken 80)
Lierse 3 (Huysmans 28, 44, Zdebel 82) Att: 6,000

Charleroi 1 (Wuillot 23)
Ostende 1 (Edmilson pen 49) Att: 5,000

Mouscron 5 (Vidovic 37, pen 55, Tanghe 64, Castro 84, El Idrissi 89)
Lokeren 1 (Koller 29) Att: 8,500

Genk 1 (Origi 90)
Gent 0 Att: 16,400

St Truiden 2 (Vrancken 16, Fiers 74)
Eendracht Aalst 0 Att: 5,500

Westerlo 0
Harelbeke 3 (Franken og 57, Baudry 80, Ansah 88) Att: 4,500

Sunday, January 31

Ekeren 1 (Morhaye 35)
Lommel 0 Att: 3,000

Kortrijk 1 (Prunier 78)
Standard 3 (Bilic 6, De Conde 25, E Mpenza 77) Att: 9,000

Saturday, February 6

Beveren 0
St Truiden 1 (Van Oekelen 90) Att: 2,500

Friday, February 12

Lierse 1 (Haagdoren 64)
Mouscron 2 (Pierre 41, Tanghe 75) Att: 5,000

Saturday, February 13

Eendracht Aalst 1 (Thiebaut 16)
Genk 2 (Strupar 22, 26) Att: 8,000

Gent 3 (Foguenne 16, 48, 74)
Kortrijk 1 (Keita 62) Att: 7,000

Lommel 0
St Truiden 1 (Fiers 88) Att: 4,500

Standard 2 (Folha 9, E Mpenza 70)
Charleroi 0 Att: 10,000

Sunday, February 14

Harelbeke 0
Club Brugge 2 (Vermant 34, Verheyen 55) Att: 8,000

Ostende 1 (Windels 50)
Beveren 1 (Nuhiji 82) Att: 10,000

Saturday, February 20

Anderlecht 2 (Anastasiou 37, Van Diemen 83)
Ekeren 0 Att: 20,401

BELGIUM

	P	W	L	D	F	A	Pts
Genk	23	15	5	3	51	26	50
Club Brugge	23	15	4	4	42	22	49
Mouscron	23	12	7	4	52	35	43
Gent	23	11	7	5	40	38	40
St Truiden	23	11	6	6	32	24	39
Standard	23	12	2	9	37	27	38
Anderlecht	22	11	5	6	41	32	38
Lokeren	22	11	4	7	46	35	37
Ekeren	23	10	4	9	36	34	34
Lierse	23	10	3	10	43	37	33
Westerlo	22	9	3	10	43	40	30
Harelbeke	23	6	8	9	29	36	26
Aalst	23	7	5	11	31	41	26
Charleroi	22	4	9	9	27	34	21
Lommel	23	5	4	14	23	36	19
Beveren	23	4	5	14	24	41	17
Kortrijk	23	3	5	15	32	59	14
Ostende	23	2	8	13	21	53	14

BELGIAN CUP – QUARTER-FINALS

Feb 20: Ingelmunster 1 Standard 3; Lokeren 3 Westerlo 0.
Feb 21: Kortrijk 0 Lierse 6.

CROATIA

Feb 21: Osijek 1 Mladost 127 3; Hrvatski drag 3 Cibalia 1; Croatia 2 Slaven 1; Zadarkomerc 5 Varteks 3; Sibenik 0 Rijeka 1; Hajduk 1 Zagreb 0.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	17	13	2	2	35	11	41
Rijeka	17	13	1	3	24	12	40
Hajduk	18	10	6	2	34	14	36
Osijek	18	9	3	6	29	18	30
Varteks	18	6	3	9	29	31	21
Hrvatsjudrag	18	5	6	7	14	17	21
Zagreb	17	4	7	6	20	27	19
Zadarkomerc	18	5	4	9	25	33	19
Mladost 127	17	5	3	9	21	29	18
Cibalia	18	4	5	9	16	25	17
Sibenik	18	5	2	11	22	41	17
Slaven	18	3	6	9	20	31	15

ENGLAND

Saturday, January 30

Blackburn 1 (Jansen 43)
Tottenham 1 (Iversen 61) Att: 29,643

Coventry 2 (Boateng 60, Whelan 71)
Liverpool 1 (McManaman 86) Att: 23,056

Everton 0
Nottm Forest 1 (Van Hooijdonk 51) Att: 34,175

Middlesbrough 0
Leicester 0 Att: 34,361

Newcastle 2 (Shearer 4, Ketsbaia 27)
Aston Villa 1 (Merson 61) Att: 36,766

Sheffield Wed 0
Derby 1 (Prior 54) Att: 24,440

Southampton 3 (Kachloul 31, Oakley 62, Ostenstad 86)
Leeds 0 Att: 15,236

Wimbledon 0
West Ham 0 Att: 23,035

Sunday, January 31

Arsenal 1 (Bergkamp 32)
Chelsea 0 Att: 38,121

Charlton 0
Man Utd 1 (Yorke 89) Att: 20,043

Wednesday, February 3

Man Utd 1 (Yorke 65)
Derby 0 Att: 55,174

Saturday, February 6

Aston Villa 1 (Joachim 69)
Blackburn 3 (Southgate og 32, Ward 62, Dunn 64) Att: 37,404

Chelsea 1 (Zola 11)
Southampton 0 Att: 34,920

Leeds 0
Newcastle 1 (Solano 63) Att: 40,202

Leicester 0
Sheffield Wed 2 (Jonk 48, Carbone 78) Att: 20,113

Liverpool 3 (Owen 9, Heggem 44, Ince 45)
Middlesbrough 1 (Stamp 86) Att: 44,384

Nottm Forest 1 (Rogers 6)
Man Utd 8 (Yorke 2, 66, Cole 7, 49, Solskjaer 80, 87, 89, 90) Att: 30,025

Tottenham 0
Coventry 0 Att: 34,376

West Ham 0
Arsenal 4 (Bergkamp 35, Overmars 45, Anelka 83, Parlour 87) Att: 26,042

Sunday, February 7

Derby 2 (Burton 51, 85)
Everton 1 (Barmby 38) Att: 27,603

Monday, February 8

Charlton 2 (Pringle 37, Blackwell og 68)
Wimbledon 0 Att: 20,002

Saturday, February 13

Charlton 1 (K Jones 70)
Liverpool 0 Att: 20,043

West Ham 2 (Pearce 33, Lampard 39)
Nottm Forest 1 (Hjelde 84) Att: 25,458

Wednesday, February 17

Aston Villa 1 (Scimeca 76)
Leeds 2 (Hasselbaink 8, 32) Att: 37,510

Everton 5 (Barmby 1, 16, Dacourt 62, Materazzi 67, Unsworth 74)
Middlesbrough 0 Att: 31,606

Manchester Utd 1 (Cole 60)
Arsenal 1 (Anelka 47) Att: 55,171

Chelsea 1 (Morris 44)
Blackburn 1 (Ward 84) Att: 34,382

Newcastle 4 (Shearer 19, 75, Speed 55, Saha 58)
Coventry 1 (Whelan 18) Att: 36,352

Saturday, February 20

Arsenal 5 (Anelka 23, 27, 44, Parlour 42, 48)
Leicester 0 Att: 38,069

Blackburn 1 (McAteer 68)
Sheffield Wed 4 (Sonner 20, Rudi 40, 43, Booth 82) Att: 24,643

Coventry 0
Manchester Utd 1 (Giggs 78) Att: 22,596

Derby 0
Charlton 2 (Hunt 64, Pringle 86) Att: 27,853

Leeds 1 (Korsten 55)
Everton 0 Att: 36,344

Liverpool 2 (Fowler 22, Owen 45)
West Ham 2 (Lampard pen 24, Keller 74) Att: 44,511

Middlesbrough 0
Tottenham 0 Att: 34,687

Nottm Forest 1 (Van Hooijdonk 39)
Chelsea 3 (Forssell 6, Goldbaek 25, 83) Att: 26,351

Southampton 2 (Beattie 16, Dodd 43)
Newcastle 1 (Hamann 86) Att: 15,244

Sunday, February 21

Wimbledon 0
Aston Villa 0 Att: 15,582

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Manchester Utd	27	15	9	3	61	28	54
Chelsea	26	13	11	2	39	21	50
Arsenal	26	13	10	3	34	12	49
Aston Villa	26	12	8	6	37	27	44
Leeds	26	11	9	6	39	25	42
Liverpool	26	11	6	9	49	32	39
Derby	26	9	10	7	25	24	37
West Ham	26	10	7	9	29	38	37
Wimbledon	25	9	9	7	29	35	36
Newcastle	26	9	7	10	34	35	34
Middlesbrough	26	7	12	7	33	36	33
Sheffield Wed	25	9	5	11	31	24	32
Tottenham	25	7	11	7	29	31	32
Leicester	25	7	9	9	25	34	30
Everton	26	6	9	11	19	28	27
Charlton	26	6	8	12	31	37	26
Blackburn	26	6	8	12	27	36	26
Coventry	26	6	6	14	24	37	24
Southampton	25	6	5	14	25	48	23
Nottingham	26	3	7	16	22	54	16

FA CUP – 4TH RND

Jan 25: Oxford Utd 1 Chelsea 1.
Jan 27: Sheffield Utd 4 Cardiff City 1.

4TH RND REPLAYS

Feb 2: Tottenham 3 Wimbleon 0.
Feb 3: Chelsea 4 Oxford Utd 2; Huddersfield 2 Wrexham 1.

FA CUP – 5TH RND

Feb 13: Arsenal 2 Sheffield Utd 1*; Barnsley 4 Bristol Rovers 1; Everton 2 Coventry 1; Huddersfield 2 Derby 2; Leeds 1 Tottenham 1; Sheffield Wed 0 Chelsea 1.
**Arsenal v Sheffield Utd to be replayed due to disputed 'winning' goal.*
Feb 14: Man Utd 1 Fulham 0; Newcastle 0 Blackburn 0.

LEAGUE CUP – SEMI-FINALS

Jan 26: Sunderland 1 Leicester 2.
Jan 27: Tottenham 0 Wimbledon 0.

Feb 16: Wimbledon 0 Tottenham 1
Tottenham won 1-0 on agg
Feb 17: Leicester 1 Sunderland 1
Leicester won 3-2 on agg

FRANCE

Friday, January 29

Bastia 0
Rennes 1 (Nonda 70) Att: 5,000

Bordeaux 4 (Wiltord 14, 32, Micoud 17, Laslandes 20)
Marseille 1 (Dugarry 60) Att: 35,400

Monaco 2 (Ikpeba 5, Cisse og 80)
Paris SG 1 (Rodriguez 28) Att: 5,000

Saturday, January 30

Lens 0
Lyon 3 (Caveglia 21, Job 41, 64)
Att: 32,000

Lorient 1 (O Soumah 34)
Nantes 1 (Sibierski 82) Att: 10,000

Nancy 0
Montpellier 1 (Robert 74) Att: 7,000

Sochaux 1 (Ljuboja 14)
Auxerre 1 (Carnot 89) Att: 8,000

Strasbourg 0
Le Havre 1 (Becanovic 75)
Att: 10,000

Toulouse 1 (Battles 24)
Metz 0 Att: 9,000

Saturday, February 6

Le Havre 1 (Christanval og 66)
Monaco 2 (Ikpeba 63, N'Diaye 68)
Att: 14,000

Metz 3 (Meyrieu 34, Boffin 35, Horlaville 72)
Lorient 0 Att: 12,000

Nantes 2 (Monterubio 28, Devinaud 45)
Lens 0 Att: 25,000

Lyon 2 (Grassi 64, Job 66)
Nancy 1 (Cascarino 13) Att: 18,000

Marseille 3 (Bravo 33, Ravanelli 41, 82)
Bastia 1 (Laurent 76) Att: 45,000

Paris SG 2 (Madar 23, Rodriguez 50)
Sochaux 1 (B Bouger 63) Att: 35,000

Rennes 1 (Weiser 86)
Bordeaux 1 (Wiltord 36) Att: 20,000

Sunday, February 7

Auxerre 1 (Danjou 52)
Toulouse 2 (Oceano pen 37, Petrovic 53)
Att: 8,000

Montpellier 1 (Rodriguez 43)
Strasbourg 1 (Zitelli 69) Att: 14,000

Saturday, February 13

Bordeaux 2 (Wiltord 54, 72)
Bastia 0 Att: 30,000

Lens 2 (Dalmat 10, Laspalles 84)
Paris SG 1 (Simone 65) Att: 33,000

Lorient 1 (Druon 48)
Montpellier 1 (Thimothee 50)
Att: 8,000

Monaco 4 (Ikpeba 3, pen 65, N'Diaye 20, Giuly 89)
Rennes 2 (Le Roux 8, Bardon 10)
Att: 3,000

Lyon 2 (Caveglia pen 37, 46)
Nantes 1 (Suffo 75) Att: 23,000

Toulouse 1 (Oceano pen 75)
Marseille 0 Att: 36,000

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bordeaux	24	16	4	4	51	20	52
Marseille	24	15	6	3	42	20	51
Lyon	23	11	8	4	33	21	41
Monaco	23	11	5	7	36	24	38
Nantes	24	10	8	6	33	25	38
Rennes	24	10	7	7	30	30	37
Montpellier	24	9	6	9	41	37	33
Lens	24	9	5	10	31	32	32
Auxerre	23	8	7	8	31	28	31
Bastia	24	9	3	12	28	31	30
PSG	24	7	7	10	23	24	28
Metz	23	7	7	9	22	29	28
Strasbourg	23	5	10	8	18	24	25
Nancy	23	6	6	11	21	30	24
Toulouse	24	5	9	10	18	34	24
Le Havre	23	5	7	11	17	29	22
Lorient	24	4	9	11	19	37	21
Sochaux	21	3	8	10	18	37	17

FRENCH CUP

Feb 9: Thouars 1 Paris SG 2 (aet).
Feb 20: Amiens 1 Le Havre 0; Angouleme 1 Chatellerault 0; Boulogne 1 Lille 2; Clermont F 4 Jura Sud F 1; Dijon 0 Sedan 4; St Georges-les-An 1 Sochaux 0; Le Mans 2 Rennes 0; Lens 3 Marseille 1; La Montagnarde 4 Paris FC 0; Rouen 2 St Denis St Leu 0; Wasquehal 0 Metz 2; Chateauroux 2 Laval 1 (aet); Guingamp 2 Strasbourg 1 (aet); Ajaccio 1 Troyes 1 (*Troyes won on pens*); Paris SG 1 Nantes 1 (*Nantes won on pens*); Grenoble v Olympique Nimes postponed.

LEAGUE CUP – 3RD RND

Feb 1: Monaco 0 Paris SG 0 (aet)
Paris SG won 3-2 on pens.
Feb 2: Sochaux 2 Nancy 1; Le Havre 0 Lens 2; Metz 2 Louhans-Cuiseaux 0.
Feb 3: Rennes 4 Troyes 0; Chateauroux 0 Montpellier 1; Amiens 1 Auxerre 2; Nice 0 Toulouse 2.

GERMANY

Friday, February 19

Wolfsburg 1 (Nowak 81)
Hansa Rostock 1 (Rehmer 36) Att: 14,448

Saturday, February 20

Stuttgart 2 (Djordjevic 47, Markovic 81)
Schalke 1 (Mulder 48) Att: 35,000

Duisburg 0
Bayern Munich 3 (Jancker 26, Effenberg 41, Helmer 71) Att: 26,400

Munich 1860 4 (Borimirov 5, Heldt 15, Kurz 28, Hobsch 45)
Frankfurt 1 (Westerthaler 68)
Att: 21,000

Hertha 3 (Aracic 70, 82, Preetz 84)
Dortmund 0 Att: 68,400

Nurnberg 1 (Kuka 32)
Werder Bremen 1 (Frings 8) Att: 32,000

Leverkusen 1 (Rink 81)
Freiburg 1 (Wiesshaupt pen 23)
Att: 22,000

Sunday, February 21

Borussia MG 0
Kaiserslautern 2 (Marschall 26, Asanin og 54)
Att: 25,000

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern Munich	19	15	2	2	46	13	47
Leverkusen	19	10	7	2	41	19	37
Kaiserslautern	19	11	4	4	31	28	37
Munich 1860	19	10	5	4	36	25	35
Hertha	19	10	2	7	29	19	32
Dortmund	19	8	5	6	28	21	29
Wolfsburg	19	7	7	5	35	29	28
Hamburg	18	6	6	6	23	23	24
Werder Bremen	19	6	6	7	28	26	24
Stuttgart	19	6	6	7	25	26	24
Freiburg	19	5	8	6	22	24	23
Schalke	19	5	6	8	21	31	21
Bochum	18	5	4	9	22	33	19
Duisburg	19	4	7	8	20	32	19
Hansa Rostock	19	3	8	8	27	35	17
Frankfurt	19	4	5	10	22	33	17
Nurnberg	19	2	10	7	21	34	16
Borussia MG	19	2	4	13	20	46	10

GREECE

Jan 24: Olympiakos 5 Panionios 0; Ethnikos A 1 PAOK 0; Xanthi 2 AEK 1; Proodeftiki 0 Ionikos 0; Iraklis 2 Apollon 0; Paniliakos 3 Aris 1; Ethnikos P 2 Eleysina 2; OFI 4 Kavala 0; Veroia 0 Panathinaikos 1.
Jan 31: Panionios 0 PAOK 1; AEK 2 Olympiakos 0; Ionikos 5 Ethnikos A 0; Apollon 2 Xanthi 1; Eleysina 0 Iraklis 0; Kavala 1 Paniliakos 1; Veroia 4 Ethnikos P 3; Panathinaikos 1 OFI 0.
Feb 8: PAOK 0 Ionikos 0; Ethnikos A 0 Aris 1; Xanthi 0 Eleysina 0; Proodeftiki 1 Kavala 0; Iraklis 2 Veroia 0; Paniliakos 1 Panathinaikos 2; Ethnikos P 1 OFI 3; Olympiakos 0 Apollon 0; AEK 3 Panionios 0.
Feb 10: Aris 1 Proodeftiki 0.
Feb 13: OFI 3 Iraklis 1.
Feb 14: Panionios 0 Ionikos 2; Eleysina 0 Olympiakos 2; Kavala 3 Ethnikos A 0; Ethnikos P 1 Paniliakos 1; Apollon 1 AEK 1.
Feb 15: Veroia 2 Xanthi 0; Panathinaikos 1 Proodeftiki 0; Aris 2 PAOK 0.
Feb 20: Ionikos 3 Aris 0.
Feb 21: Apollon 0 Panionios 0; AEK 6 Eleysina 2; PAOK 1 Kavala 0; Ethnikos A 0 Panathinaikos 1; Xanthi 3 OFI 1; Proodeftiki 0 Ethnikos P 0; Iraklis 3 Paniliakos 1.
Feb 22: Olympiakos 5 Veroia 0.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	20	15	2	3	52	14	47
Panathinaikos	20	15	1	4	37	20	46
AEK	20	13	4	3	47	18	43
PAOK	20	12	3	5	28	19	39
Aris	20	11	3	6	26	25	36
Xanthi	20	10	5	5	23	18	35
Ionikos	20	9	5	6	35	19	32
OFI	20	10	2	8	31	25	32
Iraklis	20	8	6	6	32	21	30
Kavala	20	6	6	8	30	39	24
Ethnikos A	20	7	2	11	22	34	23
Paniliakos	20	6	4	10	26	32	22
Panionios	20	6	3	11	29	31	21
Proodeftiki	20	4	6	10	16	24	18
Eleysina	20	2	10	8	15	29	16
Apollon	20	3	7	10	22	44	16
Veroia	20	3	4	13	12	34	13
Ethnikos P	20	0	7	13	11	48	7

HOLLAND

Friday, February 5

NEC 1 (De Gier 70)
De Graafschap 1 (Viscaal 54) Att: 6,000

Saturday, February 6

Fortuna 2 (Hamming 47, Jeffrey 87)
NAC 0 Att: 6,000

Twente 0
AZ 3 (Van Galen 14, Langerak 34, Huiberts 75)
Att: 12,751

Willem II 3 (Ceesay 55, Galasek 70, Valk 77)
Heerenveen 2 (G De Nooijer 46, Samardzic 67)
Att: 11,200

Sunday, February 7

Waalwijk 2 (Hoogendorp 4, pen 16)
MVV 2 (Emerson 3, Perez 71) Att: 4,000

Tuesday, February 9

Roda JC 5 (Van der Heyden 2, Van Houdt 4, 81, Luipers 18, Nygaard 88)
NEC 2 (Janssen 24, Sainovski 34) Att: 6,000

Sunday, February 14

Twente 2 (Ajoupov 45, Vennegoor of Hesselink 80)
Ajax 1 (Gronkjaer 38) Att: 13,500

Sparta 0
Utrecht 1 (Van Eijkeren 70) Att: 3,000

Wednesday, February 17

Heerenveen 2 (Oliseh og 4, Pahlplatz 80)
Ajax 2 (Babangida 50, Oliseh 52) Att: 14,000

NEC 0
Willem II 3 (Bombarda 26, Oosterhof og 47, Ramzi 86) Att: 4,500

RKC 0
Fortuna 0 Att: 4,500

Vitesse 3 (Machlas 21, Van Hintum 40, Amoah 77)
NAC 1 (Shoukov 30) Att: 20,000

Thursday, February 18

PSV 3 (Khokhlov 54, Van Nistelrooy 59, 67)
Twente 0 Att: 26,300

Saturday, February 20

Roda JC 1 (Torma 78)
Sparta 0 Att: 6,600

Fortuna 2 (Bouma 18, Van Bommel 64)
Cambuur 0 Att: 5,500

AZ 2 (Buskermolen pen 77, 89)
RKC 1 (Echteld 39) Att: 7,470

Vitesse 2 (Machlas pen 9, Booth 69)
MVV 1 (Emerson 45) Att: 21,900

Sunday, February 21

De Graafschap 0
Twente 2 (Bosman 37, Vennegoor of Hesselink 43)
Att: 8,250

Utrecht 2 (Martel 38, Van Eijkeren 88)
Heerenveen 2 (Gusatu 35, Pahlplatz 61)
Att: 13,000

Feyenoord 3 (Van Gastel pen 29, Cruz pen 43, 79)
PSV 1 (Van Nistelrooy 54) Att: 38,500

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Feyenoord	19	14	4	1	45	16	46
Vitesse	21	13	4	4	41	25	43
Roda JC	20	11	4	5	36	24	37
Twente	23	10	6	7	33	31	36
Ajax	21	9	8	4	39	20	35
Heerenveen	21	9	8	4	34	26	35
PSV	21	9	7	5	49	37	34
AZ	21	8	10	3	33	27	34
Willem II	21	9	4	8	37	37	31
Utrecht	21	8	5	8	38	37	29
NEC	22	7	7	8	31	36	28
Fortuna	22	6	6	10	26	35	24
MVV	21	5	6	10	26	36	21
Cambuur	20	5	6	9	22	36	21
De Graafschap	21	3	10	8	20	33	19
Sparta	21	4	3	14	22	41	15
NAC	20	3	4	13	23	37	13
Waalwijk	22	2	6	14	24	45	12

DUTCH CUP – 3RD RND

Feb 2: Twente 2 Fortuna 5; PSV 2 AZ 0; Vitesse 4 NAC 0; Emmen 2 Cambuur 0.
Feb 3: Eindhoven 2 Groningen 1; Zwolle 5 GA Eagles 2.
Feb 4: Utrecht 1 Feyenoord 2; Roda 0 Ajax 3.

ITALY

Sunday, January 31

Bari 1 (Knudsen 72)
Lazio 3 (Lombardo 21, Vieri 35, 86)
Att: 23,428

Cagliari 1 (Berretta 17)
Juventus 0 Att: 29,115

Fiorentina 3 (Falcone 36, Torricelli 39, Batistuta 82)
Vicenza 0 Att: 30,862

Milan 3 (Bierhoff 3, 60, Weah 25)
Salernitana 2 (Glampaolo 7, Del Grosso 14)
Att: 47,756

Parma 2 (Baggio 16, Chiesa 85)
Venezia 2 (Maniero 45, 52) Att: 20,739

Perugia 2 (Kaviedes 20, Matrecano 25)
Sampdoria 0 Att: 11,976

Piacenza 0
Inter 0 Att: 16,247

Roma 1 (Sergio 55)
Empoli 1 (Cerbone 90) Att: 41,126

Udinese 2 (Sosa 13, 74)
Bologna 0 Att: 17,192

Sunday, February 7

Bologna 3 (Signori 37, K Andersson 47, Kolyvanov 90)
Bari 1 (Knudsen 6) Att: 26,298

Fiorentina 0
Milan 0 Att: 42,000

Inter 5 (Baggio 6, Simeone 17, Djorkaeff pen 35, 66, 90)
Empoli 1 (Carparelli 57) Att: 65,311

Juventus 2 (Tacchinardi 15, Fonseca 72)
Parma 4 (Crespo 35, 40, 58, Chiesa 39) Att: 50,000

Lazio 3 (Vieri 42, Salas 45, 76)
Perugia 0 Att: 49,798

Salernitana 1 (Pierini og 47)
Udinese 2 (Locatelli 39, Amoroso 46) Att: 30,800

Sampdoria 0
Cagliari 0 Att: 20,470

Venezia 3 (Recoba 1, Maniero 45, Ballarin 66)
Roma 1 (Di Biagio 68) Att: 10,685

Vicenza 1 (Ambrosetti 10)
Piacenza 0 Att: 14,727

Sunday, February 14

Bari 0
Vicenza 0 Att: 13,183

Cagliari 0
Lazio 0 Att: 22,932

Empoli 2 (Cerbone 31, Bonomi pen 90)
Salernitana 3 (Di Vaio 33, 68, 82) Att: 6,717

Milan 2 (Guglielminpietro 39, Ganz 53)
Venezia 1 (Tuta 70) Att: 47,478

Parma 1 (Stanic 90)
Bologna 1 (Kolyvanov 23) Att: 19,421

Perugia 2 (Kaviedes 16, Rapajic 78)
Inter 1 (Djorkaeff pen 90) Att: 26,392

Piacenza 0
Juventus 2 (Manighetti og 45, Birindelli 90)
Att: 15,636

Roma 3 (Fabio Junior 10, Sergio 84, 89)
Sampdoria 1 (Lassissi 15) Att: 42,715

Udinese 1 (Sosa 80)
Fiorentina 0 Att: 21,469

Sunday, February 21

Udinese 4 (Sosa 38, 48, Amoroso 64, Bertotto 78)
Bari 0 Att: 18,783

Milan 1 (Bierhoff 50)
Cagliari 0 Att: 52,811

Bologna 2 (Binotto 16, Signori 81)
Empoli 0 Att: 25,142

Lazio 1 (Conceicao 39)
Inter 0 Att: 66,756

Salernitana 1 (Di Vaio 85)
Parma 2 (Cannavaro 42, Stanic 55)
Att: 32,349

Venezia 2 (Recoba 13, Maniero 47)
Perugia 1 (Bucchi 90) Att: 12,441

Sampdoria 3 (Montella pen 23, Laigle 34, Ortega 57)
Piacenza 2 (Piovani 70, pen 82) Att: 18,749

Juventus 2 (Amoruso 11, Conte 30)
Vicenza 0 Att: 44,596

Fiorentina 0
Roma 0 Att: 34,169

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lazio	22	13	6	3	44	21	45
Fiorentina	22	13	4	5	37	19	43
Milan	22	12	7	3	34	24	43
Parma	22	11	8	3	40	21	41
Udinese	22	10	6	6	31	28	36
Inter	22	10	4	8	43	30	34
Juventus	22	9	6	7	26	23	33
Roma	22	8	8	6	42	31	32
Bologna	22	8	8	6	28	20	32
Bari	22	5	11	6	25	30	26
Cagliari	22	7	4	11	30	34	25
Venezia	22	6	7	9	21	30	25
Perugia	22	7	4	11	29	39	25
Vicenza	22	4	8	10	11	27	20
Sampdoria	22	4	8	10	21	40	20
Piacenza	22	4	7	11	27	37	19
Salernitana	22	5	4	13	22	38	19
Empoli	22	3	8	11	19	38	15

ITALIAN CUP – QUARTER-FINALS

Jan 26: Bologna 0 Juventus 1
2-2 on agg. Bologna won on away goals.
Jan 27: Inter 5 Lazio 2 (*Inter won 6-4 on agg*); Parma 4 Udinese 0 (*Parma won 6-3 on agg*).
Jan 28: Fiorentina 1 Atalanta 0
3-3 on agg. Fiorentina won on away goals.

SEMI-FINALS

1st legs
Feb 18: Inter 0 Parma 2.
Feb 19: Bologna 0 Fiorentina 2.

PORTUGAL

Monday, January 25

Sporting Braga 0
Farense 0

Friday, January 29

Beira Mar 1 (Gila 47)
Benfica 1 (El Khalej 56)

Saturday, January 30

Boavista 2 (Ayew 37, Timofte 90)
Campomaiorense 1 (Marco Almeida 70)

Farense 0
FC Porto 3 (Rui Barros 15, Fernando Mendes 88, Zahovic 90)

Sunday, January 31

Alverca 0
Uniao Leiria 2 (Dinda 46, Bakero 67)

Estrela Amadora 2 (Gilberto 18, Lewis 81)
Chaves 1 (Wanderley 63)

Maritimo 3 (Bunbury pen 55, Bruno 71, Eusebio 90)
Sporting Braga 0

Rio Ave 1 (Andre Luis 60)
Vitoria Setubal 1 (Nando 66)

Sporting Lisbon 5 (Beto 22, Edmilson 28, Simao 57, Acosta 61, 67)
Academica 0

Monday, February 1

Guimaraes 3 (Edmilson 30, Gilmar 41, Riva 62)
Salgueiros 3 (Fernando Almeida 17, 90, Celso 85)

Saturday, February 6

Campomaiorense 0
Sporting Lisbon 0

Sporting Braga 2 (Toni 58, Gamboa 67)
Guimaraes 1 (Edmilson 28)

Sunday, February 7

Academica 2 (Mauricio 1, Mickey 41)
Estrela Amadora 2 (Paulo Ferreira 21, Jorge Andrade 90)

Benfica 5 (Saunders 23, 45, King og 51, Nuno Gomes 70, 87)
Farense 0

Chaves 0
Rio Ave 0

FC Porto 1 (Drulovic 32)
Maritimo 0

Salgueiros 0
Alverca 0

Leiria 0
Boavista 0

Vitoria Setubal 0
Beira Mar 0

Saturday, February 13

Boavista 2 (Rogerio 33, Ayew 53)
Salgueiros 1 (Filipe 81)

Alverca 0
Sporting Braga 0

Beira Mar 1 (Simic 9)
Chaves 1 (Wanderley 55)

Maritimo 1 (Tulipa 46)
Benfica 0

Rio Ave 1 (Jacare pen 29)
Academica 1 (Luis Filipe 23)

Farense 1 (King 74)
Vitoria Setubal 1 (Rui Carlos 58)

Uniao Leiria 3 (Artur Jorge 4, Reinaldo 69, 80)
Campomaiorense 1 (Laelson 17)

Guimaraes 3 (Riva 15, Edmilson 36, Soderstrom 66)
FC Porto 2 (Jardel 34, 83)

Estrela Amadora 0
Sporting Lisbon 1 (Jordanov 74)

Friday, February 19

Sporting 2 (Pedro Martins 28, Edmilson 41)
Rio Ave 0

Saturday, February 20

Sporting Braga 1 (Silva 20)
Boavista 2 (Ayew 16, Timofte 69)

Salgueiros 0
Uniao Leiria 0

Sunday, February 21

Campomaiorense 3 (Mauro Soares pen 57, Laelson 85, Demetrios 87)
Estrela Amadora 0

Academica 1 (Luis Filipe 70)
Beira Mar 0

Chaves 4 (Wanderley 6, Paulo Torres 48, Luisao 79, Joel 87)
Farense 4 (Paulo Sergio 24, King 43, 61, Marco Nuno 62)

Vitoria Setubal 3 (Kasumov pen 12, Chiquinho 36, 78)
Maritimo 1 (Bunbury 62)

Benfica 3 (Joao Pinto 27, Thomas 57, Nuno Gomes 87)
Guimaraes 1 (Edmilson 15)

FC Porto 3 (Jorge Costa 18, Jardel pen 55, pen 86)
Alverca 1 (Maniche 31)

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Porto	23	16	4	3	55	21	52
Boavista	23	15	6	2	39	19	51
Benfica	23	15	4	4	50	16	49
Sporting	23	12	8	3	42	18	44
Uniao Leiria	23	10	6	7	24	17	36
Estrela Amadora	23	9	7	7	25	27	34
Setubal	23	8	7	8	22	27	31
Salgueiros	23	6	11	6	32	33	29
Guimaraes	23	7	6	10	34	31	27
Braga	23	6	8	9	29	41	26
Maritimo	23	6	7	10	26	29	25
Farense	23	6	6	11	21	38	24
Beira Mar	23	4	11	8	20	30	23
Rio Ave	23	5	8	10	18	33	23
Campomaiorense	23	6	4	13	26	38	22
Alverca	23	4	10	9	18	30	22
Chaves	23	5	7	11	28	42	22
Academica	23	4	6	13	24	43	18

PORTUGUESE CUP – 5TH RND

Feb 16: Beira Mar 7 Portomosense 0; Boavista 2 Farense 1; Leca 1 Uniao Leiria 0; Maritimo 3 Salgueiros 2; Penafiel 0 Campomaiorense 1; FC Porto 0 Torreense 1; Vitoria Setubal 2 Benfica 0.

SCOTLAND

Wednesday, January 27

Dundee 0
Rangers 4 (Miller 8, 43, Guivarc'h 12, Johansson 76) Att: 9,453

Saturday, January 30

Aberdeen 2 (Newell 34, Jess 50)
Rangers 4 (Porrini 10, Wallace 11, Albertz pen 86, Kanchelskis 90) Att: 19,537

Dundee Utd 1 (Olofsson 33)
Dunfermline 1 (Smith 46) Att: 7,646

Hearts 0
Motherwell 2 (McCulloch 48, Adams 71) Att: 12,821

Kilmarnock 0 Dundee 0 Att: 7,677

Sunday, January 31

Celtic 5 (Brattbakk 6, 76, 78, Moravcik 19, Larsson 31)
St Johnstone 0 Att: 60,092

Saturday, February 6

Aberdeen 2 (Jess 44, Mayer 47)
Kilmarnock 1 (Mahood 66) Att: 9,299

Celtic 3 (Larsson 21, 24, pen 66)
Hearts 0 Att: 59,815

Dundee 1 (Tweed 3)
Motherwell 0 Att: 4,187

St Johnstone 1 (Bollan pen 9)
Dundee Utd 0 Att: 5,771

Sunday, February 7

Dunfermline 0
Rangers 3 (Kanchelskis 56, Johansson 59, 90) Att: 11,500

Wednesday, February 17

Celtic 1 (Riseth 49)
Kilmarnock 0 Att: 59,126

Saturday, February 20

Dundee Utd 3 (Olofsson 34, Dodds 48, Hannah 66)
Aberdeen 0 Att: 8,308

Hearts 0
St Johnstone 2 (Scott 59, Kane 63) Att: 12,229

Rangers 6 (Albertz pen 24, 38, 57, McCann 51, 71, Van Bronckhorst 88)
Dundee 1 (Adamczuk 28) Att: 49,462

Sunday, February 21

Motherwell 1 (Brannan 26)
Celtic 7 (Larsson pen 22, 65, 86, 87, Moravcik 30, Burley 74, Burchill 85) Att: 11,963

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	25	17	5	3	56	22	56
Celtic	25	13	7	5	60	23	46
Kilmarnock	24	11	8	5	31	15	41
St Johnstone	25	10	9	6	31	33	39
Motherwell	25	7	8	10	24	37	29
Aberdeen	25	7	6	12	27	43	27
Dundee	25	7	6	12	22	41	27
Dundee Utd	25	6	8	11	25	29	26
Hearts	25	6	6	13	22	36	24
Dunfermline	24	2	13	9	18	37	19

SCOTTISH CUP – 3RD RND REPLAY

Feb 9: Dundee Utd 1 Queen's Park 0

4TH RND

Feb 13: Ayr 1 Albion 0; Celtic 4 Dunfermline 0; Greenock Morton 6 Clyde 1; Livingston 1 St Johnstone 3; Motherwell 2 Stirling 0; Stranraer 1 Falkirk 2.
Feb 14: Hamilton 0 Rangers 6.

SPAIN

Saturday, January 30

Athletic Bilbao 2 (J Etxeberria 9, Guerrero 60)
Zaragoza 0 Att: 38,000

Atletico Madrid 1 (Jose Mari 18)
Valencia 2 (Claudio Lopez 12, Angulo 27)
Att: 42,000

Betis Sevilla 1 (Filipescu 75)
Alaves 0 Att: 38,000

Oviedo 2 (Ivan Ania 49, Dely Valdes pen 66)
Real Sociedad 1 (Idiakez 86) Att: 10,001

Mallorca 1 (Dani 52)
Salamanca 0 Att: 11,600

Villarreal 0
Real Madrid 2 (Morientes 73, 90) Att: 16,000

Sunday, January 31

Barcelona 3 (Merino og 35, F de Boer 44, Cocu 86)
Racing Santander 2 (Victor 27, Munitis 48)
Att: 80,000

La Coruna 2 (Pauleta 9, Turu Flores 44)
Celta Vigo 1 (Sanchez 80) Att: 30,000

Valladolid 0
Extremadura 0 Att: 15,000

Tenerife 0
Espanyol 0 Att: 19,000

Saturday, February 6

Valencia 0
La Coruna 0 Att: 47,000

Sunday, February 7

Alaves 2 (Onopko og 35, Desio 58)
Oviedo 2 (Cesar 68, 88) Att: 16,000

Celta Vigo 4 (Sanchez 41, Michel Salgado 79, Penev pen 85, Revivo 90)
Villarreal 1 (Moises 26) Att: 21,000

Espanyol 1 (Benitez 42)
Mallorca 0 Att: 24,200

Extremadura 1 (Dure 20)
Barcelona 2 (Luis Enrique 29, Kluivert 82)
Att: 11,000

Racing Santander 2 (Preciado 24, Munitis 90)
Athletic Bilbao 0 Att: 16,572

Real Sociedad 1 (De Pedro 63)
Tenerife 1 (Paz 25) Att: 22,300

Real Madrid 3 (Raul pen 18, pen 52, 90)
Valladolid 2 (Vizcaino 65, Klimowicz 87)
Att: 55,000

Zaragoza 2 (Aragon pen 20, Kili Gonzalez 27)
Betis Sevilla 2 (Finidi 36, Alfonso 57)
Att: 20,000

Salamanca 2 (Lanna 32, Edu Alonso 42)
Atletico Madrid 1 (Correa pen 19) Att: 8,569

Saturday, February 13

Atletico Madrid 1 (Jose Mari 22)
Espanyol 2 (Arteaga 39, Dario Silva 84)
Att: 20,000

La Coruna 1 (Turu Flores 51)
Salamanca 0 Att: 15,000

Mallorca 1 (Biagini pen 63)
Real Sociedad 0 Att: 11,000

Sunday, February 14

Athletic Bilbao 0
Extremadura 0 Att: 36,000

Barcelona 3 (Luis Enrique 5, 37, Rivaldo 81)
Real Madrid 0 Att: 98,000

Betis Sevilla 1 (Denilson 65)
Racing Santander 1 (Munitis 15) Att: 4,000

Valladolid 2 (Caminero 27, Alberto 78)
Celta Vigo 1 (Revivo 60) Att: 14,000

Zaragoza 1 (Jose Ignacio 3)
Alaves 1 (Gerard 41) Att: 18,000

Tenerife 0
Oviedo 2 (Pompei 7, Dely Valdes pen 52) Att: 16,000

Villarreal 1 (Craioveanu 89)
Valencia 0 Att: 14,000

Saturday, February 20

Racing Santander 2 (Arzeno 22, Ismael 73)
Zaragoza 4 (Acuna 20, Pablo 29, Milosevic 69, Marco Vales 90) Att: 14,994

Real Madrid 0
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Ezquerro 72) Att: 85,000

Extremadura 2 (Toril pen 79, Dure 89)
Betis Sevilla 1 (Galvez 81) Att: 11,000

Sunday, February 21

Alaves 3 (Magno 42, Pablo pen 43, Berti 90)
Tenerife 1 (Juanele 31) Att: 16,000

Oviedo 1 (Pompei 4)
Mallorca 3 (Dani 1, 84, Paunovic 66)
Att: 12,375

Espanyol 2 (Fran 52, Turu Flores 53)
La Coruna 2 (Helguera 42, Posse 81)
Att: 27,000

Salamanca 1 (Tellez og 10)
Villarreal 0 Att: 12,000

Valencia 0
Valladolid 1 (Peternac 80) Att: 40,000

Celta Vigo 0
Barcelona 0 Att: 31,000

Real Sociedad 3 (Jauregi 28, Aramburu 47, De Paula 73)
Atletico Madrid 2 (Juninho 24, Serena 33)
Att: 23,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	23	13	5	5	48	25	44
Mallorca	23	12	5	6	25	15	41
Celta	23	10	8	5	44	27	38
Deportivo	23	10	8	5	33	25	38
Valencia	23	11	4	8	32	23	37
Real Madrid	23	11	4	8	44	36	37
Athletic Bilbao	23	11	4	8	30	29	37
Oviedo	23	9	7	7	31	33	34
Real Sociedad	23	9	6	8	32	29	33
Zaragoza	23	9	6	8	32	31	33
Atletico Madrid	23	9	5	9	39	30	32
Espanyol	23	7	10	6	25	24	31
Betis	23	8	7	8	22	26	31
Villarreal	23	7	6	10	28	34	27
Santander	23	6	8	9	28	32	26
Valladolid	23	7	5	11	21	29	26
Salamanca	23	6	4	13	19	36	22
Alaves	23	5	6	12	20	35	21
Extremadura	23	5	6	12	15	35	21
Tenerife	23	3	10	10	21	35	19

SPANISH CUP – 4TH RND

Feb 2: Atletico Madrid 0 Real Sociedad 1
2-2 on agg. Atletico won on away goals.
Feb 3: La Coruna 1 Celta Vigo 1 (aet)
La Coruna won 2-1 on agg;
Racing Santander 1 Athletic Bilbao 0
Santander won 3-2 on agg;
Mallorca 1 Betis Sevilla 0
Mallorca won 2-0 on agg;
Valladolid 2 Espanyol 2
Espanyol won 6-4 on agg;
Valencia 1 Levante 0
Valencia won 4-0 on agg;
Villarreal 0 Real Madrid 2
Real Madrid won 4-0 on agg.
Feb 4: Barcelona 3 Benidorm 0
Barcelona won 4-0 on agg.

QUARTER-FINALS – 1ST LEGS

Feb 17: Atletico Madrid 2 Espanyol 1;
Racing Santander 2 Real Madrid 6;
Mallorca 1 La Coruna 1.
Feb 18: Barcelona 2 Valencia 3.

TURKEY

Jan 23: Ankaragucu 2 Galatasaray 2.
Jan 29: Ankaragucu 0 Besiktas 1.
Jan 30: Kocaelispor 1 Samsunspor 0; Fenerbahce 3 Dardanelspor 1.
Jan 31: Gaziantepspor 1 Trabzonspor 1; Antalyaspor 2 Sakaryaspor 2; Karabukspor 1 Bursaspor 0; Istanbulspor 6 Adanaspor 0; Erzurum 2 Genclerbirligi 2; Altay 0 Galatasaray 2.
Feb 5: Besiktas 2 Antalyaspor 1.
Feb 6: Genclerbirligi 0 Fenerbahce 3.
Feb 7: Sakaryaspor 6 Gaziantepspor 2; Adanaspor 2 Erzurum 0; Samsunspor 0 Istanbulspor 1; Karabukspor 0 Kocaelispor 1; Trabzonspor 0 Altay 3; Dardanelspor 3 Ankaragucu 0; Galatasaray 5 Bursaspor 0.
Feb 12: Kocaelispor 1 Galatasaray 2.
Feb 13: Altay 2 Sakaryaspor 0; Karabukspor 2 Istanbulspor 2; Gaziantepspor 2 Besiktas 0; Antalyaspor 1 Ankaragucu 4; Erzurum 1 Samsunspor 0.
Feb 14: Bursaspor 0 Trabzonspor 1; Fenerbahce 6 Adanaspor 0.
Feb 19: Samsunspor 1 Fenerbahce 1.
Feb 20: Besiktas 1 Altay 1.
Feb 21: Trabzonspor 0 Kocaelispor 3; Adanaspor 1 Genclerbirligi 1; Sakaryaspor 4 Bursaspor 1; Ankaragucu 1 Gaziantepspor 1; Dardanelspor 2 Antalyaspor 0; Karabukspor 1 Erzurum 1; Galatasaray 3 Istanbulspor 3.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	21	15	3	3	57	14	48
Galatasaray	21	14	5	2	59	23	47
Besiktas	21	13	6	2	36	17	45
Trabzonspor	21	12	4	5	30	23	40
Kocaelispor	21	11	4	6	27	21	37
Istanbulspor	21	9	6	6	37	28	33
Antalyaspor	21	9	4	8	27	26	31
Genclerbirligi	21	7	8	6	28	27	29
Gaziantepspor	21	7	7	7	30	31	28
Altay	21	7	4	10	28	35	25
Ankaragucu	21	7	3	11	26	30	24
Bursaspor	21	7	3	11	32	45	24
Samsunspor	21	6	4	11	23	36	22
Erzurum	21	5	7	9	22	42	22
Adanaspor	21	6	3	12	20	38	21
Sakaryaspor	21	4	5	12	25	36	17
Dardanelspor	21	3	8	10	14	27	17
Karabukspor	21	3	4	14	16	38	13

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

Group 1
Feb 23: Estudiantes (Ven) 2 Monterrey (Mex) 1.
Feb 24: Bella Vista (Uru) 0 Nacional (Uru) 1.

Group 2
Feb 24: Velez Sarsfield (Arg) 1
River Plate (Arg) 1; Deportivo Cali (Col) 1
Once Caldas (Col) 0.

Group 3
Feb 24: Cerro Porteno (Par) 4 Olimpia (Par) 3.

Group 4
Feb 24: Universitario (Per) 2 Sporting Cristal (Per) 1.

Group 5
Feb 21: LDU Quito (Ecu) 4 Emelec (Ecu) 1.
Feb 24: Blooming (Bol) 0 Jorge Wilsterman (Bol) 0.

BOLIVIA

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 7: Real Santa Cruz 2 Guabira 2; Bolivar 3 Blooming 1; Jorge Wilsterman 0 Real Potosi 1; Independiente Petrolero 3 San Jose 2; Union Central 3 Destroyers 0; Oriente Petrolero 2 The Strongest 2.
Feb 10: Real Potosi 2 Oriente Petrolero 1; Guabira 1 Bolivar 1; Jorge Wilsterman 3 Independiente Petrolero 2; The Strongest 2 Union Central 1; Blooming 2 San Jose 0; Real Santa Cruz 1 Destroyers 1.
Feb 13: Bolivar 5 Destroyers 0; San Jose 4 Guabira 1; Real Santas Cruz 3 The Strongest 2.

BRAZIL

RIO-SAO PAULO TOURNAMENT

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Santos	5	3	1	1	11	5	10
Vasco da Gama	5	3	1	1	12	7	10
Fluminense	5	2	0	3	10	10	6
Palmeiras	5	1	0	4	4	15	3

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sao Paulo	6	4	1	1	8	4	13
Botafogo	6	2	2	2	15	12	8
Flamengo	6	2	2	2	11	8	8
Corinthians	6	1	1	4	6	16	4

Top two of each group qualified for final round

SAO PAULO CHAMPIONSHIP

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portuguesa	7	5	1	1	14	6	16
Barbarense	7	4	2	1	13	7	14
Rio Branco	7	4	0	3	15	10	12
Sao Jose	7	2	2	3	4	9	8
Inter Limeira	7	2	1	4	6	12	7
Ituano	7	0	2	5	4	12	2

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guarani	7	4	2	1	15	7	14
Matonense	7	3	1	3	13	14	10
Mogi Mirim	7	2	3	2	14	14	9
Portuguesa Sant	7	3	0	4	11	16	9
Uniao Sao Jose	7	2	2	3	13	13	8
Aracatuba	7	2	2	3	13	15	8

Top four teams in each group qualify for 2nd stage, for which Palmeiras, Corinthians, Santos and Sao Paulo qualify automatically

CARIOCA (RIO) CHAMPIONSHIP

INTERIOR GROUP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Intaperuana	3	3	0	0	6	2	9
Volta Redonda	4	2	1	1	4	2	7
Cabofrienses	3	1	1	1	3	2	4

CAPITAL GROUP

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olaria	3	0	2	1	4	5	2
America	3	0	0	3	0	6	0

Teams play each other twice regardless of group – group winners qualify for second stage, together with last year's top eight (Vasco da Gama, Botafogo, Flamengo, Fluminense, Americano, Friburgones, Bambu and Madureira)

COLOMBIA

Feb 7: Quindio 2 Cortulua 0; Envigado 0 Once Caldas 2; Millonarios 1 Independiente Santa Fe 1; Atletico Huila 1 Tolima 1; Union Santa Marta 1 Atletico Junior 1; America 3 Deportivo Cali 3.
Feb 14: Once Caldas 0 Nacional 2; Independiente Medellin 1 Envigado 2; Independiente Santa Fe 2 Atletico Huila 0; Tolima 1 Millonarios 1; Bucaramanga 1 Union Santa Marta 1; Quindio 0 America 3; Deportivo Cali 3 Tulua 2.
Feb 18: Deportivo Pasto 1 Bucaramanga 1.
Feb 21: Independiente Santa Fe 2 Tolima 0; Atletico Huila 1 Millonarios 1; Nacional 1 Envigado 1; Deportivo Cali 0 Quindio 2; Cortulua 3 America 1; Bucaramanga 1 Atletico Junior 1; Union Santa Marta 4 Deportivo Pasto 1; Once Caldas 1 Independiente Medellin 1.

COLOMBIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ind. Santa Fe	3	2	1	0	5	1	7
Quindio	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
Union Sta Marta	3	1	2	0	6	3	5
Nacional	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
America	3	1	1	1	7	6	4
Once Caldas	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Deportivo Cali	3	1	1	1	6	7	4
Envigado	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Millonarios	3	0	3	0	3	3	3
Bucaramanga	3	0	3	0	3	3	3
Cortulua	3	1	0	2	5	6	3
Atletico Junior	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Deportes Tolima	3	0	2	1	2	4	2
Atletico Huila	3	0	2	1	2	4	2
Indep. Medellin	2	0	1	1	2	4	1
Deportivo Pasto	2	0	1	1	2	5	1

PARAGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 13-14: 12 de Octubre 1 Cerro Porteno 1; San Lorenzo 5 Colegiales 2; Sol de America 2 Presidente Hayes 0; Sportivo Luqueno 4 Resistancia 2; Olimpa 2 Guarani 2.
Feb 21: Sportivo Luqueno 3 San Lorenzo 1; Sol de America 2 Resistencia 1; Guarani 3 Presidente Hayes 2; Colegiales 2 Cerro Cora 2.

PERU

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 7: Alianza Lima 5 JMI Talara 0; Alianza Atletico 1 Melgar 1; Cienciano 2 Sport Boys 0; Juan Aurich 1 Sporting Cristal 2; Municipal 1 Deportivo Pesquero 2; Universitario 2 Union Minas 1.
Feb 14: Union Minas 3 Minicipal 0; Sporting Cristal 1 Cienciano 1; Deportivo Pesquero 0 Alianza Lima 0; IMA Talara 0 Alianza Atletico 2; Universitario 0 Sport Boys 0.
Feb 20-21: Sporting Cristal 2 Universtario 0; Alianza Atletico 2 Deportivo Pesquero 1; Sport Boys 1 Municipal 1; IMI Talara 1 Juan Aurich 1; Cienciano 0 Melgar 0.

PERU

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Alianza Atletico	3	2	1	0	5	2	7
Sporting Cristal	3	2	1	0	5	2	7
Cienciano	3	1	2	0	3	1	5
Melgar	3	1	2	0	3	1	5
Alianza Lima	2	1	1	0	5	0	4
Dep. Pesquero	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Universitario	3	1	1	1	2	3	4
Union Minas	2	1	0	1	4	2	3
Sport Boys	3	0	2	1	1	3	2
Juan Aurich	3	0	1	2	2	5	1
Dep. Municipal	3	0	1	2	2	6	1
IMI Talara	3	0	1	2	1	8	1

VENEZUELA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

Feb 14: Estudiantes 3 Universidad de los Andes 0; Italchacao 1 Carabobo 0; Nueve Cadiz 3 Mineros Guyana 3; Tachira 0 Caracas 0; Nacional 0 Inter Lare 0.

CONCACAF

MEXICO

Preliminary round

Round 1
Jan 15: UAG 2 Morelia 4.
Jan 16: Necaxa 5 UNAM 1; Puebla 2 Cruz Azul 2; Tigres 4 Pachuca 3; Atlas 3 Monterrey 2; Celaya 1 Neza 2.
Jan 17: Leon 0 America 2; Atlante 2 Toluca 3; Santos 2 Guadalajara 2.

Round 2
Jan 23: Toluca 3 Santos 2; Cruz Azul 2 Atlas 1; Monterrey 1 Celaya 2; UNAM 3 Puebla 2 (*in Queretaro*).
Jan 24: Guadalajara 3 Tigres 1; Morelia 3 Atlante 2; Pachuca 1 Necaxa 1; America 1 UAG 0 (*in Queretaro*); Neza 0 Leon 0.

Round 3
Jan 27: Santos 1 Morelia 0; Tigres 4 Toluca 4; Celaya 0 Cruz Azul 0; Leon 0 Monterrey 1; UAG 2 Neza 1.
Jan 28: Pachuca 1 UNAM 1; Atlante 1 America 1; Atlas 3 Puebla 0.
Feb 3: Necaxa 3 Guadalajara 0.

Round 4
Jan 30: Toluca 3 Necaxa 1; Cruz Azul 3 Leon 2; Monterrey 3 UAG 0.
Jan 31: Morelia 2 Tigres 3; UNAM 0 Atlas 0; Neza 3 Atlante 3; America 3 Santos 1; Puebla 3 Celaya 1; Guadalajara 0 Pachuca 0.

Round 5
Feb 5: UAG 2 Cruz Azul 0.
Feb 6: Necaxa 0 Morelia 1; Tigres 3 America 4; Celaya 1 Atlas 2.
Feb 7: Guadalajara 2 UNAM 1; Leon 3 Puebla 1; Pachuca 0 Toluca 3; Atlante 3 Monterrey 1; Santos 1 Neza 0.

Round 6
Feb 20: Toluca 1 Guadalajara 0; Monterrey 2 Santos 5; Puebla 1 UAG 0; Atlas 4 Leon 0.
Feb 21: Morelia 0 Pachuca 2; Neza 2 Tigres 1.
Feb 24: UNAM 2 Celaya 2; America 1 Necaxa 1.

GROUP 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cruz Azul	5	2	2	1	7	7	8
Guadalajara	6	2	2	2	7	8	8
Puebla	6	2	1	3	9	12	7
Atletico Celaya	6	1	2	3	7	10	5
Leon	6	1	1	4	5	11	4

GROUP 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
América	6	4	2	0	12	6	14
Atlético Morelia	6	3	0	3	10	10	9
Toros Neza	6	2	2	2	8	8	8
Pachuca	6	1	3	2	7	9	6
Pumas UNAM	6	1	3	2	8	12	6

GROUP 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Necaxa	6	2	2	2	11	7	8
Monterrey	6	2	0	4	10	13	6
Tecos UAG	6	2	0	4	6	10	6
Atlante	5	1	2	2	11	11	5

GROUP 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Toluca	6	5	1	0	17	9	16
Atlas	6	4	1	1	13	5	13
Santos Laguna	6	3	1	2	12	10	10
Tigres	6	2	1	3	16	18	7

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

PRELIMINARY ROUND

Jan 29-31: Red Sea (Eri) 1 Rayon Sport (Rwa) 1; ASC Ndiambour (Sen) 4 Invincible Eleven (Lbr) 0; USFA Yennaga (BuF) 2 Dragons de l'Oueme (Ben) 0; Ela Nguema (EqG) v Santana FC (STP) *Ela Nguema walkover – Santana withdrew before 1st leg*; Telecom Wanderers (Mwi) 0 Scouts Club (Mts) 1; SS Saint-Louisienne (Reu) 2 Red Star (Sey) 0; AS Cotonchad (Chd) 2Al Mahala (Lby) 0; Notwane (Bot) 1 RL Defence Force (Les) 1.

Feb 12-14: Rayon Sport (Rwa) 2 Red Sea (Eri) 0
Rayon Sport won 3-1 on agg;
Invincible Eleven (Lbr) v ASC Ndiambour (Sen)
ASC Ndiambour walkover. Invincible Eleven withdrew after first leg;
Dragons de l'Oueme (Ben) 1 USFA Yennaga (BuF) 0
USFA won 2-1 on agg;
Scouts Club (Mts) 1 Telecom Wanderers (Mwi) 3
Telecom won 3-2 on agg;
Red Star (Sey) 0 SS Saint-Louisienne (Reu) 4
Saint-Louisienne won 6-0 on agg;
Al Mahala (Lby) 3 AS Cotonchad (Chd) 0
Al Mahala won 3-2 on agg;
RL Defence Force (Les) 3 Notwane (Bot) 1
Defence Force won 4-2 on agg.
Still to play: Real Banjul (Gam) v AS Kaloum Stars (Gui).

FIRST ROUND DRAW

Maji Maji (Tan) v Al Ahly (Egy);
Rayon Sport (Rwa) v AFC Leopards (Ken);
ASC Ndiambour (Sen) v Raja Casablanca (Mor);
Djoliba (Mali) v Cotonsport (Cam);
FC105 Libreville (Gab) v ASEC Abidjan (IvC);
USFA Yennega (BuF) v USM El Harrach (Alg);
Ela Nguema (EqG) v Hearts of Oak (Gha);
SC Villa (Uga) v Mebrat Hail (Eth);
Real Banjul (Gam) or AS Kaloum Stars (Gui) v Shooting Stars (Nga);
Costa do Sol (Moz) v Daring Club Motema Pembe (DR Congo);
Telcom Wanderers (Mwi) v Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf);
SS Saint-Louisienne (Reu) v DSA (Mad);
Al Mahala (Lby) v Esperance (Tun);
Nchanga Rangers (Zam) v Al Hilal (Sud);
Vital'O (Bdi) v Primiero Agosto (Ang);
RL Defence Force (Les) v Dynamos (Zim).

First legs March 12-14; return legs March 26-28.

CUP-WINNERS CUP

PRELIMINARY ROUND

Jan 29-31: Anges Fatima (CAf) 6 Union Vesper (EqG) 0; Mogas 90 (Ben) 0 LPRC Oilers (Lbr) 0; Bata Bullets (Mwi) 4 Hinsta (Eri) 2; Djivan (Mad) 0 Defence Force XI (Bot) 0; Marsouins (Reu) 5 Arsenal (Les) 0; Fire Brigade SC (Mts) 2 Saint Michel (Sey) 2.

Feb 12-14: Union Vesper (EqG) 2 Anges Fatima (CAf) 3
Anges Fatima won 9-2 on agg;
LPRC Oilers (Lbr) 1 Mogas 90 (Ben) 0
LPRC Oilers won 1-0 on agg;
Defence Force XI (Bot) 3 Djivan (Mad) 1
Defence Force XI won 3-1 on agg;
Arsenal (Les) 1 Marsouins (Reu) 3
Marsouins won 8-1 on agg;
Saint Michel (Sey) 2 Fire Brigade SC (Mts) 2
4-4 on agg. Saint Michel won 3-2 on penalties.

FIRST ROUND DRAW

WA Tlemcen (Alg) v Al Shaat (Lby);
AS Mineurs (Gui) v LPRC Oilers (Lbr);
Royal Armed Forces (Mor) v ASC Yeggo (Sen);
Wikki Tourists (Nga) v Renaissance (Chad);
Africa Sports (IvC) v Stade Malien (Mali);
Simba FC (Uga) v Tanzania Stars (Tan);
Dynamo Douala (Cam) v Anges Fatima (CAf);
Club Africain (Tan) v AS Fonctionnaires (BuF);
Konkolo Blades (Zam) v Saint Michel (Sey);
Coffee FC (Eth) v Inter-Star (Bdi);
Matare (Ken) v Bata Bullets (Mwi) or Hinstra (Eri);
Petro Atletico (Ang) v AS Dragons (DRC);
Maxaquene (Moz) v Marsouins (Reu);
Orlando Pirates (SAf) v Defence Force XI (Bot);
Al Masry (Egy) v Al Merreikh (Sud);
Asante Kotoko (Gha) v Ndzimba (Gab);

First legs March 12-14; return legs March 26-28.

CONFEDERATION OF AFRICAN FOOTBALL CUP

FIRST ROUND DRAW

US Medina (Alg) v Guinea representatives;
Al Ahli (Sud) v Sud Medhin (Eth);
Canon Yaounde (Cam) v APR FC (Rwa);
Mumias Sugar (Ken) v Ferroviario Beira (Moz);
Zamalek (Egy) v Elite FC (Bdi);
Stade Tamponnaise (Reu) v ASFTM (Mad);
Accra Great Olympics (Gha) v Etoile Filante (Bdi);
Vita Club (DRC) v Desportivo Mongomo (EqG);
Wydad Casablanca (Mor) v Al Ahli Benghazi (Lby);
Diaraf Dakar (Sen) v FC Man (IvC);
Kwaru United (Gha) v Young Africans (Tan);
Angola representatives v Police XI (Bot);
Etoile Sahel (Tun) v Centre Salif Keita (Mali);
Medlaw Megbi (Eth) v Express SC (Uga);
Power Dynamos (Zam) v Royal Leopards (Swa);
CS Sfaxien (Tun) v Energie Sports (Ben).

First legs March 12-14; return legs March 26-28

ASIA

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QUARTER-FINALS – EAST ASIA ZONE

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Wednesday, February 10

Jubilo Iwata 1 (Nakayama 28)
Pohang Steelers 1 (Park Sang-in 48)

Dalian Wanda 2 (Hao Haidong 42, Wang Peng 64)
Pusan Daewoo Royals 2 (Ahn Jung-hwan pen 45, Kim Jae-young 81)

Friday, February 12

Pusan Daewoo Royals 1 (Sabitovic og 17)
Pohang Steelers 1 (Park Sang-in 15)

Dalian Wanda 2 (Hao Haidong 1, 74)
Jubilo Iwata 0

Sunday, February 14

Pusan Daewoo Royals 0
Jubilo Iwata 2 (Oku 63, Fujita 90)

Dalian Wanda 1 (Wang Peng 16)
Pohang Steelers 1 (Abbas Jassem 60)

FINAL TABLE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dalian Wanda (Chn)	3	1	2	0	5	3	5
Jubilo Iwata (Jap)	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Pohang Steelers (SKo)	3	0	3	0	3	3	3
Pusan Daewoo (SKo)	3	0	2	1	3	5	2

Dalian Wanda and Jubilo Iwata qualified for semi-finals

CUP-WINNERS CUP

QUARTER-FINALS

First legs
Feb 12: Kazma (Kuw) v Talaba (Iraq)
Talaba walkover – Kazma withdrew, refusing to play an Iraqi club;
Al Ittihad (SAr) 3 Pakhtakor (Uzb) 0.

Second leg
Feb 21: Pakhtakor 0 Al Ittihad 1
Al Ittihad won 4-0 on agg

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Price of talent...Gareth Barry's signature cost Aston Villa more than they bargained for

THE ORIGINAL Children's Crusade took place in medieval times, when a misguided child led cohorts of youngsters to what they hoped would be the Holy Land, only to find themselves sold into slavery. Now we have the case of Torino and Vincenzo Sarno.

Torino have splashed out £75,000 to bring 10-year-old Vincenzo from Naples to Turin with his unemployed father and the whole family. Apparently he is a prodigy with a sublime left foot and precocious skills, and is touted as the new Maradona. But signing him is an enormous gamble and one that could well rebound on both boy and club.

How, at so early an age, can anyone be sure what will happen?

One of the more interesting and encouraging features of the contemporary game (it is hardly new) is the phenomenon of the late developer. Time and again, we find players who have been rejected in their early careers breaking through formidably, and even – look at the case of David Platt – maturing into international stars.

But the present practice of big clubs descending on smaller clubs to bear away their young, carefully-developed talent seems alarming. Brighton and Hove Albion, who, goodness knows, have had enough problems to contend with in recent years, are still licking their wounds after losing their two brightest young prospects to Aston Villa.

It is all very well for Villa manager John Gregory to jeer that Dick Knight, Brighton's resilient chairman, wouldn't recognise Gareth Barry were he to stand on Brighton beach wearing an Albion shirt with a seagull on his head. The other lad is actually a relative of Knight!

What could we think when Villa, jibbing against paying the £200,000 second tranche for Barry decreed by a Premiership tribunal, were at the same time ready to shell out £15million for Atletico Madrid's little Brazilian, Juninho?

Then there is the curious case of Jermaine Pennant, the 15-year-old Notts County hope, reportedly a very fast young man indeed, who has joined Arsenal. Notts County and their chairman say they have no complaints about the way the Gunners have treated them; they are being handsomely compensated. But what's been going on?

An intermediary, who is *not* Pennant's official agent (at 15!), was photographed handing an advance on an alleged £10,000 payment to Pennant's father – to the rage of the official agent.

Perhaps Vincenzo Sarno and his family can glean hope from the fact that Benito Carbone, now at Sheffield Wednesday, was only a couple of years older than he when Torino plucked him from the Deep South. Fortunately, he was able to live in Turin with his sister. But how many kids have, and will have, their lives shattered by the clubs who wrest them from home?

And given the present trends, what incentive is there for the smaller clubs to press on with their youth development schemes to try to produce the players who in former times they could sell on to the richer clubs, and thus stay afloat?

Talking point...Marc Overmars scores Arsenal's controversial 'winner' against Sheffield United

Right reasons, wrong decision

THE ROMANS called it a hard law, but the law. English law has a useful adage, too: hard cases make bad law.

Both came to mind after watching Arsenal beat Sheffield United in the FA Cup at Highbury with The Goal That Never Was, when Nwankwo Kanu failed to let the opposition have the ball back after an injury, and the Football Association acceded within the hour to Arsenal's offer of a re-match.

This was very chivalrous of Arsene Wenger, the Arsenal manager, but it was astonishing that the FA, which tends to drag its feet in disciplinary matters, should react with such indecent haste. Apparently none of its appointed bird-brains had the sense to realise that this constituted a major and potentially dangerous precedent, which surely demanded a careful cogitation, rather than a knee-jerk populist Tony Blair-like reaction?

Peter Jones, the referee, simply acted in accordance with the established Laws of the Game in validating the goal, and Philip Don, the head honcho of our referees, was right to deplore the FA's action.

I sympathise with Sheffield United. It was a ludicrous goal to lose, and their anger and dismay were perfectly justifiable. But the convention, which pleasingly has arisen over recent years, that a team who put the ball out after injury (or in certain cases when their opponents put the ball out) should be given it back from the throw, or vice versa, is precisely that – a convention. *It does not have the force of law.*

The suggestion by Sheffield United's manager Steve Bruce that the referee should have taken play back and given his team a free-kick for ungentlemanly conduct was ingenious but just as irrelevant. It was not ungentlemanly conduct, however seemingly unsporting.

Rules should be rules, but with a populist FA and a 51-bad-new-ideas-a-day president of FIFA, what hope can there be?

Blair, the Punch and Judy man

TONY BLAIR'S intervention in the Hoddle Affair was deplorable. What was he doing on the Punch and Judy – or Richard and Judy – show at all, let alone embroiling himself in a matter that had nothing to do with him?

I was not sorry to see the back of Hoddle and the ineffable Eileen Drewery, but it should have happened immediately after the publication of his deplorable World Cup diary, not because he made those tactless statements about the disabled. It was very proper to deplore them, but here, too, a doubtful precedent was set.

Moreover, to sack Hoddle on the verge of an important friendly against France, and with the European Championship qualifying game against Poland on the horizon, was particularly ill-judged.

True, his players had, for the most part, turned away from him after the pressures of Dreweryism and the betrayal of confidences in his book, but at least there would have been a certain continuity.

As it was, the French humiliated an England team most of whose players made you wonder – and I speak as one who fought alongside Jimmy Hill to abolish the maximum wage – what correlation there was between payment and performance.

Overtaken by events

WHEN ASKED what was the bane of all governments, the late Harold Macmillan was supposed to have replied: "Events." How quickly events have overtaken David Platt at Sampdoria.

I was not surprised that Platt, pleading pressures, should be home so early from the job he never should have been offered in the first place.

Not because, as Eugenio Fascetti, the manager of Bari, thundered and as Azeglio Vicini, who resigned his official coaching supremo role in consequence, deplored, Platt did not have the requisite diploma – this was true of Roy Hodgson when he took over initially as the manager of Inter; but because Platt, in stark contrast to Hodgson, had no proper managerial experience at all.

The real architect of the whole sorry episode was Enrico Mantovani, the president of Sampdoria and no adequate successor to his formidable father, Paolo. What a confession of failure to have to reinstate Luciano Spalletti, the manager he had so recently sacked.

Recovering from long-ball poison

WHEN THE amiable, modest and sympathetic France manger, Roger Lemerre, gave a media conference after his team's triumph at Wembley, he paid tribute to the contribution of France's so-called Formation Centres.

We have them too, now, under the somewhat euphemistic guise of Centres of Excellence, but as we know all too well – and the evidence was there at Wembley – this kind of thing can work both ways.

Coaching under the dismal aegis of the FA's Long Ball Charlie "Brazil have got it wrong" Hughes for years poisoned the wells of the English game, and it is only now that we are gradually recovering.

England's future is not bleak. There's a great deal of young talent coming through such as Rio Ferdinand (whatever the occasional mistake), Joe Cole, Kieron Dyer, Lee Hendrie, Darren Huckerby, Gareth Barry, Jonathan Woodgate and Emile Heskey.

Where we may find ourselves struggling is at the 2006 World Cup, when the malign effects of poaching by the big clubs on the little clubs, and the flood of foreign imports could have such a serious effect on talent.

Flying start...new national coach Bruce Arena

A light on the USA's horizon

LET US HOPE that Germany's 3-0 defeat in Florida will be a stimulus to Major League Soccer, though so many American players seem to have to go abroad – not least to Germany – to flourish.

"This is all we need to make the game go over here," said the USA's Scottish coach, Bill Jeffery, after the States had beaten England 1-0 in the 1950 World Cup. America, however, turned over and went to sleep.

Things are very different now. It was always plain that a nation which produces so many superb athletes could, and would, produce footballers as well if it set its mind to it.

Sadly, financial rewards for soccer in the States remain relatively minuscule. But a substantial start has been made under new coach Bruce Arena.

From the archives...

April 1963

NO PRIZES for guessing the figure in red and white on the cover of *World Soccer* for April 1963. Yes, he's the incomparable Stanley Matthews, then a mere 48 years of age, in action for Stoke City against Bury.

Matthews – later Sir Stanley – was a key figure in Stoke's one-point victory over Chelsea in the Second Division title race that season.

Elsewhere in the issue, Gordon Jeffery summed up the implications of England's 5-2 defeat by France in a European Nations Cup qualifier, the first match played under manager Alf Ramsey.

Ramsey gave an international debut to a former Tottenham colleague, left-back Ron Henry, who had the misfortune to be up against the game's outstanding player, Maryan Wisnieski. Not surprisingly, perhaps, Henry's first cap proved to be his last. But, as we all know, things got better for the manager.

One Player Portrait makes fascinating reading for those who remember Florian Albert, one of the few post-Puskas Hungarians who could have held his own with the 1953 vintage. Those saw his display against Brazil at Goodison Park in the 1966 World Cup will never forget it.

The writer, Bernard Moser, reveals that Albert – virtually unknown outside his native country in 1963 – had been orphaned as a boy, but made such progress that he had won 30 caps by the age of 21.

He scored a hat-trick against Yugoslavia when 18, helped Hungary to a bronze in the 1960 Olympics, and scored against England and Bulgaria in the 1962 World Cup.

Another Player Portrait was devoted to a 19-year-old Italian – Gianni Rivera. He was described as a Golden Boy – and he went on to become a Golden Adult.

Brian Glanville, as now, was a fixture on *WS* pages. He began his piece by writing: "Football seems more and more to be moving towards a concentration of power; a world in which the strong survive at the expense of the weak."

For 1963, read 1999.

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